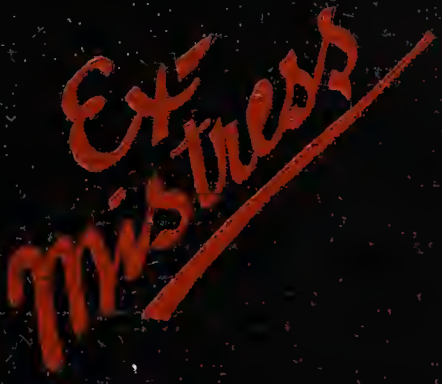
Ex
Mistress

1930

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EX-MISTRESS

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ANONYMOUS

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TO

MY MAN

All the names, places, and dates in this narrative have been changed beyond possible recognition. And the circumstances have been altered and rearranged beyond the possibility of identification.

"I know not love," quoth he, "nor will not know it

Unless it be a boar, and then I chase it;

'Tis much to borrow, and I will not owe it;

My love to love is love but to disgrace it;

For I have heard it is a life in death,

That laughs and weeps, and all but with a breath."

Shakespeare: Venus and Adonis

EX-MISTRESS

I

I WAS about sixteen when I began to take any real notice of life. It was nearly eight years later before Life began to take any real notice of me.

That, as is always the case, was when the fun began.

I am not a bad woman. I am not a prostitute. I'll please have that distinction understood, before we go any farther. I might admit to being a lily of the field, except that I certainly have toiled, and when it came to spinning I was no paralytic.

Statistics are not in my line. Yet I think, judging from my own observations, that if one took all the mistresses of the world and matched the total against all the wives in the world—well, last year's election might have been different. Mistresses so seldom vote.

What makes a girl play that game is a peculiar study. Psychologists dote on it, and they have a lot more to say on the subject than I have—only they say it so nobody but their publisher can really understand it. Personally, I feel that it's like greatness

with men. Some women are born that way, some set out to make themselves so, and others have it thrust upon them. I belong to all three categories, through various stages.

Why so much is made of it all, I can't understand. Perhaps that is unfair. It isn't that people don't understand, it's that understanding does not neatly coincide with their own personal feelings.

What I mean is, that I can't take seriously what is known these days as the "sex war." It's just one tremendous joke, only it's so hard to laugh. We're all nice enough, and all rotten enough—men and women both. We all want the same thing. And I don't mean bread and butter.

Bed and Board are primary necessities in everyone's life. Somehow nobody discusses board feverishly. Why bed should be put first in the common phrase, the psychologists will have to explain. After all, bed is only a place for peace, ecstasy or pain, depending upon the circs. A bed has four legs, and men-and-women only two, but they both have to be made.

Being a mistress has many advantages not commonly recognized by the gum-chewers of the nation. To begin with, you never have to play ball with a mother-in-law. Again, it gives one character more than any career that I know. You have to be hard as nails, and soft as butter. You play the cards fairly, much more so than any wife breathing—simply be-

cause you *have* to. You keep yourself beautiful, charming, gracious, sparkling, alive, supple, alluring and young. And maybe that isn't a fatiguing, endless, and absorbing job! There are certain rare species of wives who do the same thing. Those are the ones whose husbands haven't girl or lady friends. Again I falter on statistics—but it is to laugh raucously (a thing I've learned not to do) how many husbands take a feminine sedative on the side. About the same average as pyorrhea. And it is to weep (a thing which a bad woman does in her cups, a prostitute does in court, a mistress does only in privacy, and a good woman does invariably), how successfully husbands can pull the well-known wool over their wives' eyes.

Which is neither here nor there—any more than eggs for breakfast.

Men are a strange lot. There are boys, men, gents, bums, and gentlemen. I've only had experience, (fortunately or unfortunately) with the first and last. Which is a ridiculous statement; for what is breeding? I've seen the soul of a gentleman in the slums, and the air of a gentlewoman in a peasant. But you know what I mean.

I think I know them—all. I've had plenty of opportunity. You see, if copybooks are right, and life is a school of experience, a mistress certainly gets a complete education. Your average wife is like a student who concentrates on one subject with only one

text book, and then thinks she knows it all. Besides, a mistress works her way through. And every man who has done that at college has told me how rottenly advantageous it was.

At any rate, even today, I am not dissatisfied. I may be a lot of other things, but I'm not dissatisfied. I've had almost every known experience to womankind, except dope and Lesbianism. Neither appealed to me. Just a couple of the gifts of life that I passed up. I've even had the superstitious joy of wearing a wedding ring. Amusing, how simple they are to buy, with nobody roused to the least embarrassment but yourself! I've bought myself, at various stages, plain gold, wide and handsome; platinum, and a circlet of diamonds. They all served their purpose—and only myself staged a scene when I lost one!

I'm thirty-seven now, far more beautiful and just as desirable as I was at seventeen. According to the standards I've set for myself during the past ten years, I ought to be the happiest woman alive. Oh well, I'm not unhappy a whole lot. I'm pretty contented (which of course may be fatal, but it's nice); and I have my life's work cut out for me now. The real point is, that there isn't an ashamed bone in my body, nor a regret—that's wrong, there is a regret! But it isn't for the kind of life I've led. If anyone wants a complete course in refined sin, I guess I could give it. But I couldn't be bothered, because

there is no telling where it would lead. It's led me to North Carolina, and to . . .

But that's the finish of my story—if indeed, I am really finished.

I was born in 1893—but who the hell cares? Only that seems to be the way to start life stories. I remember a voluminous lot about my childhood, but why go into that? It only gives me a fit of the sulks, and a spell of self-pity that sends me eventually to the medicine chest—(since drink is only for medicinal purposes these days). And I happen to be trying to cut down on wine, men and song lately—because, like grapenuts, there's a reason.

From the pictures taken by some atrocious photographer of the day, I must have been a very presentable baby. Like ninety-nine out of a hundred other human beings, I was an unwanted child. The prisons are full of them. So are the streets. And the docks, the factories, the restaurants, and the Senate. Maybe it isn't a handicap, and isn't worth mentioning. It's one of the outstanding things I remember, that's all. The shock, when I was ten, of the time my big brother told me about it. He was six years older than I; and he remembered the quarrels, and the remarks that passed the nine months away for my mother and father just before I was forced on them. He always liked to hurt me, Eddie did. He was the one who told me about Santa Claus when I

was five. That isn't worth mentioning either. Anyway, he took a green-eyed delight in watching the white and shocked expression on my face as he told me "they" hadn't wanted me. It was the first time I ever swore. The first time I ever used the expression "Aw, to hell with it."

Which is the best way of dismissing a brother. And a good way of dismissing many things in life. It was pretty much my motto during a certain span of years.

After that, however, I looked at mama and papa with new eyes. I mean, I really saw them. As people. I watched them—stupefied—for weeks. I've always been rather clear-headed, thank God. But being so while I began to watch my parents, was one of the first things that turned me against marriage. They were so good, so hard-working, aond so acrimoniously devoted to each other.

Mama was a little bit of all right. Just a little bit. She was fine in her way. Only she had never quite found the way. She was a yes-and-no woman, filled with maybes and perhapses. They never get anywhere. Mama had only got to the outskirts of a suburban town. A suburban town is bad enough—but the outskirts of one!

It was papa who gave me a pain. He gave all of us a pain—except mama. She only ached from him. He was a bull-headed *good* man, with a lot of principles and no ideals. A sawdust tyrant. Hard-work-

ing, earnest, honest (except with himself); he had beaten his way from twenty-five dollars a week to ninety. He stayed at ninety until he was within ten years of death, and then dropped to seventy-five. But Papa and Ted Lewis would have nothing in common if they ever met. Know what I mean? When it came to any joy of living, any salt in the dough of existence, papa merely sprouted another grey hair and remarked we were having chicken too often, and that when he was our age he hadn't needed a fancy rain-coat.

Maybe papa learned a lot on the commuter's train, or in his office. Nobody in the family ever told him anything. What he would eventually find out about us was his business and our misfortune.

I don't know anything about genealogy nor does it interest me any more than horoscopes. But certainly I never got any of my allure from papa. Nor from his ancestors, I'm sure; who, I gather, dug little holes in the ground and put potatoes in them throughout whole lifetimes out in Nebraska. Or maybe it was Idaho. It must have been Idaho. I remember paying eighty cents for a baked Idaho potato at the Ritz. Not that it signifies, for I'm sure papa's folks never raised a Ritz potato.

So much for papa. The less I talk about him, the better I like it.

But mama could have been swell—if she were let. Papa kept her toned down. Devoted his life to

it from his breakfast to his apple before bed. She was so patient—so loving—so anxious to keep us all happy and at peace with each other. I get sick inside every time I think of mama and how rotten little she ever got out of life. You see, she had never learned to say "to hell with it." She loved papa. I know enough now to understand that. But she was afraid of him. So afraid, that dark stains of perspiration would gather under the armpits of her faded old jersey dress when he raised his voice. She loved us all—and feared us all. She certainly grew to fear *me,* which was one of the bitterest stings I ever got out of life. She loved Eddie best of all, because he was the most worthless of us all. Mothers like her are that way.

Well, when I began to study my mother and father—at the age of ten, I committed my first sin. I mean, I broke my first commandment. (Of course I had told uncountable lies before that—but lies don't happen to have occurred to Moses.) The first commandment I let out of my list was "Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother." I couldn't do it. It was asking too much. It worried me so that I chewed my fingernails.

Then I said "Aw, to hell with it," and gave it up. I loved mama, but I couldn't honor her. I could only feel sorry for her. And I grew, quite deliberately and cold-bloodedly, to hate my father. A great big stuffed owl, that God, as a Taxidermist, had worked over

most carefully and given a weird appearance of reality. Whoever let him be a land-owner, and the boss of the four souls within his clap-board walls (my mother, my sister, Eddie and myself) was more than I could figure out. There ought to be a law! I have always despised, fervently, the people who are not fit for their jobs.

Eddie and I had little in common but a family name. He was a good-looking loafer who swiped everything within reach. An attractive, glib, blond (if I only had his hair!) as sneaky as rubber-soled shoes, and about as dependable as the smoke of a cigarette. Spoiled, by everyone except papa, who goaded Eddie deeper and deeper into his rotten habits by giving the boy nothing and demanding everything. Eddie was headed for a criminal career from the start. At six he swiped pickles out of the grocer's barrel, and at twenty-six he swiped anyone's car that was standing on the street, took a ride in it, and parked it back in place by the curb when he was through. The only good thing about him was the fact that he was generous. If he had a lollipop, he'd give you the dyed candy and keep the stick.

This isn't Eddie's story. But it happens that he has affected my life a whole lot. It was his gang I got in with that started the whole trouble. I've so often thought that an "only child" has an advantage from the beginning. The less relatives, the less worries, I always say.

I was sixteen years old, just getting by with my lessons and hoping to graduate from grammar school with the aid of three weeks cramming, when Eddie realized he had a pretty sister. He stopped picking on me, and changed his tactics. He "let me in on things," and covered up his growing respect for my astuteness by continual teasing. I hated the teasing really, but faced it with as much indifference as I could muster, because I realized a spirit of comraderie behind it.

A brother who teases, hurts your feelings, humiliates you and lets you know where you get off, is a swell training for any girl in the battle of the sexes. She may think her brother a monster, utterly unlike every other thing in pants she meets. But men have a least common denominator. Monarchs, monks and merchants, they're all alike. I imagine. I've never met a monk.

Anyway, I was flattered at Eddie's realization that I was really a person, not just a growth. Outdid myself to live up to him and his drugstore friends. Maybe I wasn't staggered. Maybe I wasn't shocked—so that my hands were cold, and I'd tremble behind the ears. But I never let on. I wanted to be one of the crowd. That was before the flask age, but cider barrels abounded, and cider isn't milk. Kids didn't have automobiles to run around in those days, but the front seat of a trolley car took you a long way for a nickel—if you wanted to go.

EX-MISTRESS

Nothing bores me so much as people who yowl about the younger generation. I've lived in the older generation—older than this one anyway—and it's my opinion that youth is youth with or without flannel underwear; and girls will be girls and the quicker they know it the better, be it the Bloomer Age, or the Camisole Age.

I had just triumphed in graduating from grammar school, in a white, stiff, satin-sashed monstrosity of a girlish dress, with my brown hair—(I didn't become blond until nearly six years later)—in braids down my back, when I met Needy Ross. His real name was Charles Needham Wentworth Ross. I never talked to his mother so I can't explain it. But his nickname fit him perfectly.

Needy gave me that spring-is-here feeling from the first moment I met him. Stop me if you've heard this one before!

What I saw in Needy is a puzzle to me now. You know how it is: you probably try to figure that out about your own man. He had a better mind than mine, only it worked too fast. Probably, Needy's real charm was the fact he was so different from me. I was pretty dreadfully poor, and Needy came from a "fine family." Most women want a change when they love. Heiresses marry chauffeurs, good women try to reform rummies, and the drab seek rich mates, all for the same reason. Something different. Love is a relief from monotony, with both men and

women. And the year that love becomes monotonous is the date that's put on its tombstone.

Needy's father was the head of a travel agency. In connection with some big company of liners. Though they were not snooty and sold tickets for railroads as well as for ships. Which meant the Ross family travelled frequently, as part of their graft. They had a nice home in the nice part of town. Not the swanky part. But the nice part. (Remember, I lived on the outskirts.) Needy had nice clothes, was appallingly clean, and could get things at the drug store "on trust." Which last impressed me as I have never since been impressed. We were so poor we had to pay for everything, and do without the rest.

He was an only child; and he owned a tandem bike, which altho already passé was a thrilling relief from trolley rides for me.

Small towns are hard to explain, especially when it's been a long time since you've lived in one. But I'll try, though it doesn't make sense. Needy wasn't eligible for the "high-class" crowd of the suburb. Just didn't fit, probably because his ma and pa didn't belong to the right clubs, or give enough to the church and hospital. So Needy joined up with our gang. Still retaining his dignity, and seeing to it that we were all thoroughly aware of his superiority. If you can't find anything else to admire in me it will be that I always pick the cream of my particular milk bottle.

Well, to make a long story even longer, he picked me out from the start. He said it was the satiny long brown braids, but you don't have to swallow that as I did.

It's amusing, to realize how little I remember. Only the thrill of being given a half pound box of chalky chocolates, with heads of magnificent females on the lid, with rude red roses and real white teeth. And I remember the thrill of being told I was a long-sight nicer than Catherine Russell, the really rich girl of the town, and that if I had been born in her smart high-laced shoes, I would have given her cards and spades. Which is the last thing I've ever wanted to give anybody—but it certainly went over big with me at the time.

Just the same, it was a swell psychology, if anyone can call psychology swell. Years and years later, I read a poem of Poe's when I happened to be in out of the rain at a public library. One of the few poems I've ever memorized. It's always been a comfort to me—first a galling bitterness of resentment, and later a quiet understanding and resignation. It's about an angel that's a swell singer, and it ends up with a very human speculation:

"If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,

He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky."

That's really the basis of how every woman figures. "If I could spend what she spends I'd look a damn sight more breath-taking."

But to get back to Needy, I don't feel as if it all happened to me. In my bookkeeping of experiences, I find he figures only as Petty Cash. Yet your first sweetheart, or your first love is the most important. So the saying goes. But sayings always have more sense than sensitivity.

The trouble is I can't explain what happened, or excuse it. I can only tell it.

My mother never told me anything, as they say in *True Story*. But that doesn't let me out. Because my sister, Rita, did tell me things, and plenty. Almost as soon as Rita, the near-sighted, found out I was chasing around with Needy, she began to tell me things. How she ever learned them all, I don't understand. Very often one discovers that prudes know a great deal more about mechanics than the sports. Maybe it's what makes them that way.

Rita was ten years older than myself, and she was always more like an aunt than a sister. There had been about two children, who had died, between her

and Eddie, about three between Eddie and me, and one after me. Again, I can't vouch for my statistics.

Anyway Rita was the first born of that glorious match of mama and papa. And if my hunches don't fail me, I'm sure Rita was all our ancestors rolled into one. Nobody can ever say I never knew a good woman intimately because Rita was surely a good woman. First to last. Of the unadulterated type. Studious, thrifty to the point of nausea, charitable (objectively if not subjectively), a good cook, a good polisher, duster and scrubber; swell at marketing and bargaining, pound wise and penny foolish. She saw to it she was shocked at somebody three times a day, or she couldn't sleep peacefully. Lord knows I don't mean to criticize Rita. But, as Burgess puts it, "I'd rather see than be her."

She was so good, my Rita, that mama and papa didn't bother to love her or wrestle with her. They just took her for granted. Which is what happens to so many good people. She made all of her own dresses—(and most of mine until I knew enough to put an end to it). In her room was a mirror only big enough to see her face. I don't believe she ever saw the rest of herself, or maybe things would have been different. She was the kind who put on her nightgown before taking off her underthings. Tall, angular, high-chested, well-fed, so that "buxom," a word of the day, was thoroughly suitable. Tons of hair, darker than mine, that she flattened down with

a cap of silk thread which she crocheted herself. Soap and talcum powder were the limits of her bodily luxuries—with spasmodic jars of salve for occasional outbreaks of eczema.

Rita was twenty-six, when I was sixteen and nuts over Needy. She supported herself; had a small savings account, and made gorgeous presents to mama of a bag of flour, or a barrel of sugar, or quantities of hominy that the rest of us had to eat our way through. Genteel and accomplished to the extent of being able to spell, she accepted "positions," with a grim gleam of duty in her eyes, as a governess to rich offsprings who preferred funny papers to learning how to spell. Rita had already been doing that for several years, in fits and starts. The fits came when she discovered that any man in the house where she worked happened to glance at her. Successively, she left four "positions" for that same reason, and would start all over again. She was just on the verge of leaving one of them when, on a week-end at home, she sniffed my romantic leanings toward Needy.

And did I get talked to! And talked at! Around and around in circles, in one ear and out the other, went Rita's words. Telling me about *men!* Nobody can say, when she was through, that I did not know the facts of life. So I haven't that excuse for all that happened later.

But Rita's violent outbursts only left my mind

fevered. I sat, timid and resentful, feeling that my older sister was the type nobody but a minister or a Y. M. C. A. captain would pay any attention to. I watched her eyes grow Vesuvius; and two big red blotches spread on her cheeks as if her words slapped her;—I watched and wondered mightily. Her mind was like a room that never had the windows opened.

As soon as Rita went back to her "position," I met Needy at the corner drug store again. And this time his glances, and his thin softish fingers and his pale words had a peculiar significance. An excitement like scenic railways.

Perhaps it was natural. I've heard people who have had Port Said described to them, grow throaty with the desire to go and see it.

One day, Needy and I took a long ride in the country on the tandem bike, a wicker basket of soggy luncheon tied behind. We sat all afternoon, fishing in a haphazard brook that occasionally produced what the boastful called a trout. And when Needy began, later, to talk his palpitating line of why-nots and whens, I felt those red blotches on my own cheeks. Almost tearful, I heard myself wrenching out some of Rita's bitterly flung phrases.

I can't remember conversations that far back. But I well remember how sullen and silent Needy became, as he got to his feet and began packing up the fishing tackle. I was terribly upset, but from the teething age I could always be as silent

as the next one. So I know I didn't try to say much. My heart was pounding, for I realized that while Needy wasn't angry, he was "terribly terribly hurt." I suddenly cast over my shoulder Rita and her two days preaching-bout, and wished to heaven I hadn't brought up the subject. I wanted to throw my arms around Needy and tell him I didn't mean anything, and that I knew he really loved me and wasn't a "bounder." I wanted to make him kiss me. But I didn't know how to go about it.

It never occurred to me, on the painfully estranged pedal back to town, to wonder how much Needy knew of life. To wonder if someone had told him What Every Young Man Should Know. To wonder if his own sapling mind was as filled with unmatched pearls of wisdom as my own. I was far too disturbed to think of such things. I just rode, and hated him for his silence; loved him for the tiny blond hairs around his perspiring neck; felt stirred by the trees bending reverently in the evening breeze against the lowering sun; and wondering if the one fish we caught would ever stop flopping in the wicker basket and really die. I felt sorry for that fish, and I felt if he knew what I was going through, he'd feel sorry for me, too.

Needy let me off, as was our custom, about a quarter of a mile from my house. Never once did I let him come any nearer to where, in red and purple cross-stitch, "In God We Trusted."

He got off the bike too, and unstrapped the wicker basket for me. (It had been *my* lunch, which mama had thought some of the Sunday School girls were going to eat.)

I argued with him as long as I could about taking the fish. He caught it, he should have it.

But I kept the fish. And Needy didn't unbend. Until, when I felt I couldn't stay another minute and turned to go, he said:

"I wish you weren't so pretty, Dora."

I swung around eagerly, and then something in his blue eyes made me stammer.

"I wish you weren't so nice, too."

"You do think I'm nice, then?"

"Of course, Needy—dear."

His bicycle fell, and he picked it up in some confusion.

"I *am* nice, Dora. I wish you'd believe it. I'll show you I'm nice—some day soon. Goo'bye."

"Bye," I said, and walked quickly away. He didn't say anything about "meet me tomorrow at four," or "could you get away this evening to take a walk" —or anything!

I wept deliciously on the way home. The first time I ever cried over a man! I felt as if I had spoiled everything forever. What a mess I had made trying to talk to him "like a lady." I didn't know then that ladies really don't have to talk that way. But I did know that until Rita came and put such ideas

in my head, all had been rainbows between Needy and me. I ground away the tears with the back of a scrubby palm as I neared the house, and swore that Rita or no Rita, right or no right, I'd be either a virtuous or a loose woman without talking about it.

And I've kept that swear.

I hadn't much appetite that night, but because papa was in a mood, I applied myself diligently to my sewing all evening. Sewing was the thing for young maidens, I'll have you know. I had plenty of it to do—and believe me if it wasn't done right, it was ripped out, and done all over. Ah, well, those were the days when women had to be buttoned up the back, and things were different. How different is rather wearying to rehearse. We made our own soap, mama and Rita and I—in batches; we made our own candles; we plucked our own chickens and hemmed all our linen. Or what went under the name of linen. Of course, we were a poor family, and poor people do lots of things. Maybe they do lots of things today, I don't know.

For three blindingly hot days I heard not a word from Needy. Eddie was working at a butcher shop that summer to make a little extra money for the family needs. He made five dollars a week and papa gave him fifty cents for himself. Papa was always big hearted that way. But Eddie was busy all day, and I didn't have him to talk to. At night when he

came back from his wanderings he simply said he hadn't seen Needy anywhere.

Then one evening, Eddie came home and told me Needy had rejoined the gang—with another girl! Mary Mulligan!

I chewed my finger nails, and cried myself to sleep. Mary Mulligan of all people! That little pie-faced runt! So that's all Needy cared! I tried over and over, in the dark as my tears were replaced with good wholesome anger, to say "To hell with it." But somehow I couldn't about Needy. He was so nice, and his eyes were so blue, and his voice so soft. He had a lazy, comfortable, well-taken-care-of manner; and above all, he had admired me so. Made me feel beautiful, and important and inspiring, and strong.

A magnificent whirlwind of a summer storm, about a week after, broke up the heat. I went out into that storm. I've always loved things when they got rambuctious, full of fearful lightning and terrifying thunder. Makes me feel wild, and gleeful, and devil-may-care. During that particular storm (when I should have been in helping mama close the windows that always stuck), I sat up in the branch of a big tree, watching the show, and delighting in the sopping, chilling rain paddling down on me. I knew trees were dangerous in a lightning storm, and I hoped mine would be struck—so Needy would hear of my tragic death and come to look at me, pale and too late. Something of that sort.

But I only got a thrashing from papa that night for behaving like a lunatic; and I acquired a measly cold which I took infinite pains to conceal for fear of being given Father Brown's medicine, which went for nearly everything in our house.

But the next day was cool and pleasant. At supper, when Eddie came home he told me Needy had stopped at the butcher shop and delivered a message. (I had to give Eddie a hand-crocheted handkerchief I'd made myself for his girl, before he'd tell me the message.) Needy wanted me to meet him that night "at the usual place" at 7.30.

All the while I scrubbed my neck and arms, and brushed my hair so that the braids would gleam, I told myself I wouldn't go.

But when I met him, I was glad I did. Because on our nice, slow, arms-around-each-other's-waist walk, Needy talked so grand. He'd been thinking. He tried to forget me. Then he had done some more thinking. And now he wanted to tell me—would I marry him maybe?

Ask me if I said yes.

Even though it would mean waiting until he was twenty-one (a little over two years thence), ask me if I said yes! Wake me up any time of the night and ask me; take me off my guard—stop me any time in the street, and ask me if I said yes.

You guessed it. I said yes. Schopenhauer called

women the short-legged race—which is his way of putting it, I suppose.

Perhaps the evening wasn't worth it! When we stopped under the trees, mosquitoes notwithstanding, we kissed and vowed our love and devotion. And then I'd say yes, some more, as he went on planning what we would do. I did venture to ask what he thought his mother and father would think of me. He frowned, and ad-libed; and then grew valiant, swearing he didn't care what they thought. We'd go out and make our own way and be happy without them if necessary. Then he said his folks would love me. Nobody could help loving me. And then he said, what possible objection could his parents have to my people anyway? Maybe my father wasn't a dandy, but he certainly was no disgraceful ruffian or anything. He didn't get drunk or anything. And I said, Oh, no, papa didn't drink at all; he didn't do anything.

So Needy settled it all with a shrug. Later, we could break it to his folks easy-like, and they'd grow to know I was the sweetest, most . . . (oh well, write your own lyric).

And I believed it. I can only put it down to my age, stressing in fairness to myself that the age of sixteen has changed as much since then as the value of a dollar. Nowadays a girl of sixteen knows more than her name and address.

For many many glorious, sublime, adequate weeks

Needy and I were in love. Terribly, giddily, beautifully, shyly, frantically in love. Why the whole town didn't know about it is more than I can figure out. Nobody in the whole town cared, really. True, I was bawled out incessantly and forbidden every other day to see Needy. But nobody really kept track of me, and nothing short of a broken leg would have kept me from seeing Needy in sunlight, twilight, starlight or moonlight—whenever I could. Less and less did we want to join up with the gang; more and more greedy were we for each other's tenderness and sweetness. I wasn't ashamed—not even when, at the beginning, Rita's harsh words would ring like deafening echoes in my thoughts. After all, I knew I was going to *marry* Needy.

At home, I trotted in a happy, grinning trance around the house and yard, doing everything I was told. I beat the rugs, helped mix dough, sprinkled lice-powder on our scrawny chickens, helped ma put up preserves; and helped her make her a nice-smelling mess of cold-cream, which papa thought a needless luxury but which mama insisted she had to have for her thin skin. I had always been fairly good around the house—because I was afraid not to; or because I felt sorry for mama when she had neuralgia. But now, I elbowed my way through chores with a cyclonic energy. Some of them even seemed pleasant to me, in a three-cornered way.

When Rita gave up her "position" and came

home preparatory to looking for another, I didn't mind her Jeremiah attacks. I just looked at her and pitied. I suddenly realized that mama and papa looked at her and worried. They felt shabby about Rita. She was "getting on." Twenty-six was beyond hope except for a miracle. An old maid in the family, which was awkward to laugh off.

So I paid no attention to Rita, and she was so busy looking for another job (you don't mind if I be human), that she somehow didn't suspect or dream her little sister's plight. In her mind, I was still *going* to the dogs, (since she knew I was seeing Needy), but she certainly never guessed I had already went! At times—(just to check the flow of her correctly-spelled words, or just to have the divine pleasure of telling someone)—I was tempted to confess to her that I was engaged. I didn't, only because I felt embarrassed for her—I didn't want her to envy me.

I went out of my way to be kind to Rita. Fixed up her shabby room, etc.—just because I was in love and felt so dumbly sorry for someone who didn't know such happiness.

It's funny how being in love affects some folks like that. It's always made me just a little happiness-spreader. Always made me feel like nice people.

Meanwhile, I was blowing bubbles and painting rainbows with Needy every spare minute I could lie my way out of the house. With that heady feeling

of a gambler. Over and over the dreadful possibilities that Rita had hazarded kept dingling in the back of my lemon-meringue brain, but I really didn't ever dream such things could happen to me. Like men who buy on margin against advice . . . And the chaps who think they can beat the train across the tracks. . . .

I'm the last person in the world to give the details of my priceless romance. Only good women can tell intimacies and not blush. It's one of their favorite sports. Don't get the giddy idea that I'm too satiated with love to glow in the remembrance of varied experiences. It's only that a mistress learns—and learns damn quick—to keep her own counsel. And I don't mean an attorney. Though we keep them too, as nobody since Cleopatra has been kept.

I only know Needy awakened in me everything but horse sense. So I never had to thank him for the buggy ride, later. I got the horse sense from his father, shortly after.

How absurd for me to claim that Needy and I loved as no one ever loved, before or since, etc. We simply loved as two normal, insanely young people can love. (*How* you love doesn't really matter until after twenty-five, anyway. The aim up to that time is merely—to love.)

Late in August, two great shadows fell on the sunshine of my forbidden happiness. First Needy told me, mournfully, his blue eyes very calf-like

(except that calf's eyes are brown) and his young lips with the blur of blond hairs just below the nose, trembling (the lips, not the hairs)—that his father intended to send him to college in September.

Nothing more was needed to complete our happiness. We had an ogre to worry over. Someone to come between us. A dreadful heartless giant who threatened our sanctuary. The thought of separation (against all will and desire) is the greatest little spur to love that any couple can ask. The hours we spent trying to think of ways to outwit the old ticket-seller were rich with renewed interest and tenderness.

Eddie formed the second shadow. He was kicked out of the butcher shop—nor is that verb exaggerated. Through some uncanny deftness, Eddie had swindled Mr. Butcher out of nine dollars and sixty cents. The Butcher told the police. Papa made good the money. Eddie wasn't arrested, but he couldn't lie on his back for weeks. When I think now, as I look around at my own surroundings, of being made so black and blue for nine dollars and sixty cents, I don't know whether to laugh or mix a highball.

I sympathized with Eddie dutifully. Just because everyone else was so down on him. (Mama wasn't down on him of course, but she didn't dare open her lips. All she did was go around red-eyed for days.) I've always had leanings toward the under-dog, somehow. That's what held me back for a number

of years. It took me a long time to learn to be mighty and high enough to become successful.

By route of the outside porch roof, I'd climb up to Eddie's room and sneak him sausage meat, raw eggs, and buns. Not to mention tobacco, and words of courage. I began to feel resentful of this older world—the people who sent your sweethearts away to college; beat up and lock in your brother; who told you dirty advice, and who belched at morning breakfast. Just a good, wholesome, natural rebellious feeling.

Later, I grew to hate them. The reason why is an old, moth-eaten story that should be told to the accompaniment of some soft organ music.

I discovered, in a gradual panic too painful to describe, that Rita's words had been a prophecy. Tense, frightened, and a bit knock-kneed, I told Needy one night when I met him. He didn't believe it. They never do—at first.

His worldly assurance of the utter impossibility of such a calamity calmed me not a little. Please don't think me either impertinent or sacrilegious, but I prayed to God about it. Awfully earnest prayers. Prayers with the tears streaming down my face. Just talking to Him, and explaining how important it all was. How good I would be.

And gee—maybe I might have been!

There's a song—a dreadful, bawdy, grand old

song—that I've never, never been able to hear without a snicker. . . .

"When you were sweet—
When you were sweet—sixteen!"

It makes me remember those frantic prayers—and all that happened afterward. You'll pardon me if I smile out loud.

A couple of weeks later, I got to see Needy again. I had begun to realize how hard it was getting to really see him. That night, I switched my pleas from God to Needy. Rita, just off to take a job again (this time in a house bereft of male-creatures), had stared at me, and frowned. Had taken me to her room, and shaken me—asked me things that made my brain buzz. But my urgent and insistent lies made her release me—only half satisfied in her own mind.

That showed that others recognized and realized! Why, Needy himself must recognize! He certainly didn't need the keen eyes of William Tell.

I cried it out on his shoulder. Never have done that to any man since. But I was only—sweet sixteen. . . . And when my crying had exhausted itself, and I raised my swollen face, and regarded him, my heart suddenly went dry.

He was ugly! Ugly with fear, and cowardice,—ugly and white with disillusionment as petrifying as my own.

I caught my breath, as if I'd been choking. I suddenly saw him! Not just—Needy. Not my sweetheart, who was to marry me when he was twenty-one. Not my smiling, adoring, blond lover. I saw him. A half grown boy, with thin shoulders, and small pale blue eyes, and veins in his temples that stood out. A boy-man, trembling in a grey summer suit, cheap and ill-fitting, and a shiney stand-up collar that covered some of the youthful pimples on his neck.

I saw him—and all the strength seemed to ooze out of me into my black high-buttoned boots.

He began to talk suddenly. Brokenly. Cheap, and ill-fitting and shiney words, that didn't hook up. Words dripping out of that sieve of a brain.

"Of course, we'll get married dear . . . I'll talk to father . . . I'll tell him . . . I'll have to tell him . . . Only it's so hard, because I promised him long time ago never to see you again . . . He counts a lot on me, and I hate to hurt him . . . so you've got to give me time. . . . Of course there are other ways, I suppose . . . I know there are . . . only I don't just know how to go about it . . . I suppose I could find out . . . I'll have to think it out . . . someway. . . ."

The moon isn't always romantic. It shone that night with the gleam like the belly of a dead fish. Shone right down on his dry lips, and the pale tongue with which he moistened them. The moon can be

weird and relentless and unfeeling. The very same moon that had glowed its blessing on our tender kisses . . . when we sat under a tree, heads together, and looked up at it, and sang softly. . . . Shine on, Harvest Moon. . . .

A swell harvest it reaped—that August moon of 1909.

We parted that night, and I hardly felt Needy's improvised kisses of reassurance and promise. I was still not ticking inside, as I walked homeward. The last thing Needy said to me was his promise to make a clean breast of everything to his father, and come to me as soon as the world was set right. . . .

I repeated that promise over and over. I kept out of sight of the family as much as I could. Needy didn't make a sign or a motion the next day. Day after day after day, I waited to hear from him. Waited for the miracle to happen. For the promise to be kept. When mama and papa noticed my lack of spirits I became boisterous and energetic. When mama remarked on my pale cheeks and the shadows under my eyes, and called papa's bleary-eyed attention to it, I went out and rubbed beet-juice into my skin. The first cosmetic I ever used!

A week lumbered by; ten days—two weeks, and I could hardly swallow my food. I saw things in the dark. I dreamed dreams. I was scared to go anywhere but in the woods, huddled, trying to get warm in the sun. The only thing that beat over and

over, like a persecution, in my mind were Rita's words of the early summer. I remembered her gruesome details, and I would scream with nerves and terror.

There rolled around the all-important date that I had been counting on my fingers crazily. The date Needy was to have gone to college.

I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to do something. I had to! Never did it occur to me to go to mama or papa. That was the one last unthinkable, unimaginable moment to consider. I would rather have been arrested and thrown into jail than contemplate the possibility of telling them.

Desperately, that evening, I set out for Needy's house. A four mile walk to begin with. With feet heavier than a case of Scotch. I found the number, and marvelled at the softly-glowing lamps from behind the big graceful windows. Soft, lovely piano music was coming from one of those windows, and it gave me a spurt of courage. What a nice house Needy lived in. . . . What gorgeous grounds—what beautiful flowers. . . . And a stable behind it. . . . Needy had told me about his father's horses. . . . (Now I have my own stables, with fourteen horses in their immaculate stalls; pure Arabian fillies, and blue ribbon hunters.)

Once I ever set out to do anything, I know no turning back. I may have qualms, but I never hesitate. Once my mind is made up.

A servant answered my ring. *We* had no servants. I asked for Mr. Ross. She said, the young Mr. Ross, or the old Mrs. Ross? I said, the old Mr. Ross. She asked my name. I said, Dora Macy.

She left me, and after a moment I heard voices, with a note of excitement in their mumble. My own heart was beating a tap dance. But I didn't want to turn and run. I had come to see the old Mr. Ross, and I was going to see him if I slept on his porch all night and caught him going out in the morning.

But I didn't have to do that.

The servant came back, and I didn't mind the looks she gave me—much. She led me into the parlor.

I had never been in so nice a house before. But it didn't awe me, because I was too concentrated on seeing the old Mr. Ross.

The parlor was nothing less than swell. I can see it now—with its grand green plush sofa and round-backed chairs, its oak leaves in the unused fireplace, its giltly decorated center table with legs as slender as a Russian wolfhound's, and its big worn Morris chair. Lovely upright piano with real candles actually burning. . . .

I saw old Mr. Ross at once. Sitting forward on the edge of his Morris chair, evidently concentrated on seeing me. A cane leaning against his knee. A cane with a marble head.

He had a beautiful brown beard, very red hands, big ears, and eyes that laid down the law.

My glance wavered from him to a lady standing at a doorway, which evidently led into the dining-room. I knew at once it was Needy's mother. Blonde like him, and blue eyed like him, and the same kind of spoiled expression. She was gazing at me bewildered, biting her lips nervously.

Old Mr. Ross saw me look at her and shifted his stern eyes in her direction.

"You will kindly leave this young woman to me, Molly," he said.

"But—she's so *young,* Charles!" Needy's mother protested faintly.

"Molly—if you please!" roared old Mr. Ross.

Molly knew her stuff. She turned and left without another syllable. I watched her disappear, and my throat went dry as I turned back to Needy's father.

"Now, young woman," he said, grasping the marble head of his cane firmly. "What do you want?"

I've never been so slow in opening my mouth and speaking my piece. I certainly was too slow for old Mr. Ross.

"Don't think for one moment you're going to hoodwink me or my family," old Mr. Ross laughed sarcastically and shrugged his shoulders, "I know you. I know the crowd of good-for-nothing young whipper-snappers you hang around with. The cheap-

est in town. I know your swindling brother, and your whole useless family. It won't take me two minutes to go to your father and tell him so. . . ."

"Oh no!" I cried, thoroughly frightened. "No. No. Don't do that."

"That's just what I will do," he repeated more quietly, "unless you clear out of here and mind your own business. Nobody is going to believe that Charles is the only boy in town who could be responsible for your condition . . ."

For a moment I blinked. At first it was a strain to realize that "Charles" meant Needy. I had never called him by that name. And secondly I was trying to understand that old Mr. Ross was arguing that I had known other boys—other love affairs. . . . The combination was too staggering for any comeback. I simply stared at him, dazed.

"Nobody in town would believe it," he cackled with soft worldly amusement. "*I* certainly don't believe it. And neither does Charles."

That was one too many for me.

"He couldn't think that of me!" I burst out, cussing my tears as I tried to speak straight. "He knows better. He was going to marry me, Mr. Ross, when he was twenty-one years old. He was going to . . ."

"Bah!" Old Mr. Ross whipped the air with his cane irritably. "Marry you. Don't be absurd. He's

under age. Why a boy at that age is ready to marry anything in skirts. Are you thick? Are you stupid?"

His questions were so violent that I felt as if I should answer them!

"Oh, no," he shook his head urgently. "You're not thick. You're not stupid. You just think that boy was a good grab-off. Well, I don't mind scandal. I faced such a scandal myself at his age, and it never harmed a hair of my head. I've explained all that to Charles. And a lot more I know about cheap little tikes like you. I should have explained it to him a damn sight sooner, that's all."

I was trembling all over from a chill.

Only one thought poured out of my whole body through my lips.

"Where is he?" I gasped. "Where is Needy? Where is he?"

No doubt the name Needy was as great a shock to the old geezer as Charles had been to me. He tugged at his beard with his right hand, puzzled, before he offered an answer.

"If you mean my son," he seemed to taste each syllable as he spoke. "I have sent Charles abroad with his aunt. He is going to study abroad, and travel. His mother and I shall join him there around Christmas."

"Abroad!" I echoed stupidly. "How long——"

"He left last week."

I just couldn't cry. Needy—sailing on a boat to

Europe . . . the other side of the world . . . maybe never to come back. . . . How could he have gone without saying good-bye to me?

I trembled and stepped back in fright as old Mr. Ross got to his feet. His huge red right hand shoved back an old and worn smoking jacket, and dug itself into his trouser pocket. From the crumpling of bills which he drew forth, he counted out slowly with a moistened finger,

"Five, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, and five is eighteen, nineteen . . . twenty-five. . . . There. There's all the cash I have on me. All I have in the house. You don't deserve a penny from me."

He threw the bills on the giltly decorated table that had legs as slender as a Russian wolfhound's.

I shook my head.

"No," I managed, without much dignity.

"Take it," he slapped the heap of bills wearily with the back of his paw. "Take it. It will get you into Philadelphia or to New York. Take it, and leave town if you know what's best for you. Or else —or else, I'll go to your father!"

"Go to my father!" I screamed with sudden violence. "Go to anybody. Go to *hell* for all I care. And keep your rotten old bills."

Which was a pretty good speech, considering I was just sweet sixteen. I've made better, but I've always been rather proud of that one.

Of course, it was the gesture of a nit-wit. If I

had known what twenty-five dollars would mean, and what I was going to have to do to get twenty-five dollars within the next few months, I wouldn't have been so noble a slob. It's taught me a good deal, rejecting that money. I've only refused cash once since in all my life.

My exit after that speech was anything but graceful or triumphant. I was crying again—this time from anger and resentment—as I turned and rushed from the sight of old Ross, and fought my way through a blurr of tears out the hallway. I swung upon that front door so hard that it hit the old hall-tree on the wall behind.

But out on the porch, I was confronted by a figure. A woman, with a coat thrown over her shoulder. She said something to me—but I couldn't hear her. I felt her take my hands and squeeze something into them. Something hard and small, over which she pressed my fingers until they hurt. She brushed by me quickly, and fled into the house again, flinging aside her wrap in the hallway. I remembered just a glimpse of the pale blues eyes like Needy's and the blonde hair, before the door was hastily closed.

All of this happened so quickly, that it was barely an interruption to my flight. As soon as the door closed, I continued down the wooden porch steps, across the lawn, heading blindly to the end of the street. I was blubbering as I stumbled along, and

jabbering comforting gibberish to myself through my sobs. I knew just where I was going—home! Not for any purpose; simply because it was the only place in the world I could think of going.

Four miles lay between me and home, however; and before I had covered two of them, I had stopped from sheer necessity to breathe. I sat down on a curb, panting, wiping back my damp hair, and loosening my sticky clothes. There was a pain in my side. . . .

For the first time, I realized I was still clutching that hard small object in my tightly squeezed fist. My fingers ached as I opened them, and regarded —a ring! A beautiful, gleaming ring, with a huge opal stone in the center, hemmed in with a circle of diamonds. . . . Believe it or not, such things do happen. Ask Mr. Ripley.

I don't know how long I stared at it.

I'd get up and walk a little way, and then sit on a tree stump or a stone ledge to rest a bit and gaze at the ring. Talking aloud to myself. . . . Arguing that if old Mr. Ross told papa I couldn't live at home surely. . . . I'd be beaten black and blue and locked in like Eddie. . . . And if old Mr. Ross didn't tell papa, papa would know sooner or later. . . . The only thing was to run away . . . like old Mr. Ross had said. . . . Go to Philadelphia, or New York. New York would be farther away. . . .

The town clock was striking eleven, far and weary

and distant, as I eventually reached my own house. I had an idea I would sneak in the back way like I frequently did, but papa's voice within robbed me of such an illusion. Either Eddie or mama was getting hail-columbia inside—and maybe it was about me. Maybe he wanted to know where I was at such an hour. He always wanted to know that. So many men have wanted to know that. . . .

So, I started around by the front; but before I went in, I stuck the ring in my shoe.

Too bad someone couldn't have told me how long it would be before I would ever go in that front door again!

II

At six o'clock the next morning, I climbed out of my window, over to Eddie's porch, where, at his window I received five dollars in grubby change, and a kiss. Then I shinnied down the rain spout to the soggy ground. By nine o'clock that morning I was in Philadelphia. By noon I had found a room for three dollars a week. They said it was furnished, and maybe it was. Who am I to call anyone a liar for a few sticks of wood?

I went to bed and slept as only angels sleep. Didn't wake up until the following morning, and then only to sit up and try to figure out where I was. I remembered finally, because of the hurt of my shoulder. A nasty bruise, not deep enough, fortunately, to eventually leave a scar. (I had always been agile in dodging papa.) I remembered how papa had called me everything old Mr. Ross had forgotten to call me. . . . I remembered so much that I have since conveniently forgotten, and which I hardly care to rehearse—even for a dollar a word.

But I remembered one pleasant thing. Eddie's

kiss, and his grubby coins which he had passed through the window to me; and his promise! He had told me, in a hoarse whisper, to go to City Hall in Philadelphia every night around eight, and some night he would be there to meet me! The first time he could manage to get away.

That was something to look forward to anyway.

I remembered what he had told me to do to find a job. And I began to think about that, and realize I had better hop to it. Besides, I was hungry and wanted to get out of that dirty, stuffy little room.

Evidently I had fallen asleep with all my clothes on. I went down a flight of stairs and stood outside what they called a bathroom for nearly an hour, before my turn came to use the cold water spigot. There wasn't a crumb of soap. Nor a comb. Nor a single rag that I could use as a towel. But I took off all my clothes, dashed cold water all over myself, and tried to wash off some of the grime with the palms of my hands. Which is one way to get up a good circulation.

I didn't find a job that day. But I did buy a cake of soap and a towel, which I would wash out each time I used, and spread out to dry in my room. (It never was permitted to become completely dry.) No job the next day, nor the next. And since I had paid my three dollar rent in advance, maybe I wasn't hungry by the time I finally became a delivery girl

in a hat shop at four dollars and a half a week, and they didn't pay salaries in advance!

Every day I'd tuck the ring Needy's mother had given me into my shoe, and every night I'd sit and look at it, and wonder where I could sell it. I had heard about pawn shops, but didn't know where to find them. I knew enough about human nature to be afraid to let anyone know I had such a ring.

Every evening at eight o'clock, I'd go to City Hall, and stand first on one foot and then on the other, looking and longing for Eddie.

The week at my boarding house ended before the week of my work. No salary—no room-rent; and the landlady would only trust me half. I had to pay her a dollar and a half down, or get out. I went to my boss at the hat shop, and explained. He said he'd heard that story before, and no doubt he had! But the utter defeat in my face must have made some impression on him, for he offered me a quarter of his own. I took it. I offered it to the landlady, plus ten cents I had. And she took it. That's the way life goes. Everybody takes what he can get.

Mrs. Landlady had a brilliant idea after that. She suggested if I waited on table, I could have my room at half the regular rent, and could eat "pick-ups". Which is a polite Philadelphia way of labelling left-overs.

She meant to be kind, I think, but she had eyes like a jelly fish, and I didn't like her. I accepted her

plan, because what else could I do? I was as helpless as a turtle on its back.

I barely made City Hall by eight each night, and after standing around for a half hour, I'd go home and fall into bed.

Four weeks sidled out of my youth in this fashion, before that heavenly night when Eddie met me. I shall never forget my cry of joy at the sight of his grinning freckled face. I shall never forget his swear words at my tears. Nor could I ever forget the way this rough-neck brother of mine knew his way about town. Took me into a "joint," walked right up to a table, and ordered corn-beef and cabbage, and two mugs of beer. Boy! Hot food that wasn't leftovers! Beer, which made me feel devilish, and which Eddie showed me how to swig. Beer that warmed me all over, and made me think of Eddie as one of God's little playmates.

We talked hard and fast. I told him what I've just told you, with a few more details; and he, in turn, snorted fiercely. Papa, he said, was looking for me. He was furious that a daughter of his was wandering "around the streets," and intended to find me, bring me home and make me take my medicine.

Whatever that meant!

At any rate, I knew I wouldn't like the medicine, and had no intention of letting papa put more firecrackers under my chair.

The thought of his search for me was enough to make my buttons burst!

Eddie gave me eight dollars, and that was enough to get to New York with. I asked him where he got it, and he said he had sold Needy's tandem bike for it! No doubt I would have been more shocked if it weren't for the beer, and for the fact that Eddie considered it such a big joke. He laughed uproariously, wondering how the Ross family felt when they woke up one morning to find their darling's bicycle gone!

I can't remember all the things Eddie told me. He said I looked like the devil; and that was the first time I realized that perhaps I did. He said I should see a doctor, and I got panicky at the idea. Eddie knew doctors—had found out all about them for me. He had an address. After all, somebody had to have some sense for me, if I hadn't any myself. It was a simple operation Eddie suggested. And I don't mean tonsils. But I wouldn't hear of it. Too scared.

After that Eddie had another beer. He knew me well enough to take my final word as my final word. So we never mentioned the subject of operations again.

We talked about jobs a while. In those days the important thing was *where* I worked, not *who* I worked. We discussed department stores, restaurants, hotels—all sorts of places.

Then I told Eddie about the ring.

He choked on his beer.

He got plenty excited, and I went into the ladies' room and got the ring out of my shoe, while Eddie ordered another beer for both of us. Back at the table, I slipped him the ring, and his eyes fairly perspired with excitement as he examined it.

Eddie was something of a man of the world. He knew where to get rid of the ring. Plenty of places. I got suspicious (knowing my dear blond brother) and insisted upon going with him. We made a deal. Without him I certainly couldn't cash the ring. Therefore, he deserved a fourth of whatever he got for me.

I asked him why he should need the money. *He* wasn't going to have a baby. So Eddie explained he couldn't stand our happy home any longer. With me gone, it was just a seven-room coffin. And as for mama and papa . . .

Eddie had another beer over papa. Then he told me how he planned to run away. Probably join the navy, and see the world.

He left me at the boarding house (the ring was safely back in my shoe) and I slept that night like I'd never committed a sin, which shows what beer can do when it's Pilsner.

The next day I didn't go to my job, and Eddie met me at City Hall again at eleven in the morning. By four that afternoon, we had actually a hundred

dollars cash! Eddie took his fourth, which left me seventy-five plus the eight dollars he had given me the night before. Eighty-three dollars!

I had chicken that night for dinner. The first chicken I'd eaten in six weeks. And a mug of beer. It made me feel so warm and big-hearted. I became quite excited and my cheeks were flushed and hot. I began to remember how nice Needy's mother was, and I was all for writing her a letter and telling her about my seventy-five dollars. But Eddie told me not to be such a fool, so I wasn't such a fool.

After dinner, we walked around a bit, and Eddie did quite a lot of shooting at a shooting gallery, and I laughed every time he hit a pipe. Then I got tired, so he took me home. I told him I was going to New York the next day, and I'd write him care of one of our gang as soon as I was settled.

I urged Eddie at some length to come to New York soon and join me; and was not a little disconcerted by his vague reasons as to why he couldn't. So he said "over the river," and left me at the door of that awful boarding house. That was the last I saw of Eddie until plenty of water had flowed under his bridgework.

New York had its first glimpse of me the following day, but it wasn't a bit impressed. A crisp early November evening. I knew a little something by then. I had a cheap second-hand valise with nothing in it worth cataloging. But with a valise I could

go to a hotel. So I went to the Hotel Metropole on 43rd Street and Broadway, where five years later Rosenthal was so neatly and so dramatically murdered. . . .

As soon as I got a job—as an usher in the Maxine Elliot Theatre—I changed my address to a rooming house on West 48th Street, and wrote to Eddie. I received a rambling note from him a week or so later, but it was so badly written I could understand almost none of it.

I put forty-six dollars in the bank shortly after I arrived in New York, and within three weeks I had made it fifty. That fifty rested for some time thereafter. It was all I could do to support myself from day to day and week to week, let alone add to my capital. But I was determined not to touch the fifty no matter how thin my shoes, how cold my hands, or how empty my stomach. I didn't know what might happen—that would make fifty dollars a life saver.

Times were hard in 1909. The year of the panic, and business was like a cross-breed between a snail and a bucking mule. Taft was president, and while his mustaches were darling, and his speaking voice all you could ask, he was not overpopular. (As a matter of fact, and I'm very matter-of-fact, Needy told me that on the day of Taft's inauguration, any number of parading soldiers took sick and died of pneumonia—Needy had been in Washington at

the time.) McClellan was Mayor of New York City, but that meant nothing in my routine, as I had not then reached the stage where I knew mayors by their first names.

But take it from me, times were hard. Maybe they are just as hard today for folks as poor as I was then. Only people like me find periods when times are soft.

I was scared of New York and it took me a long while to want to pioneer beyond a few blocks. The dirt, the muggy winter, the cold, the noise,—the ache of my legs and in the soles of my feet. . . . At night I would flop on my spongy mattress and close my eyes and think of spring back home . . . of the straggling bushes of sloe, and candy tuft and white-thorn, and the gorgeous smell of overgrown privet bushes . . . of fields of sweet, sheep-bitten grass . . . and of the little brook where sometimes you could catch a trout. . . . If you're going to be poor, you might as well stay out in the country. . . .

For a while, I settled down to being placidly unhappy. I always knew that there was practically nothing to eat outside of my window-sill but I possessed the bland hope of Mother Hubbard when I opened it to find a bone. I had to keep the window closed otherwise. It may be unsanitary, but what can you do in the middle of winter when you slept in your clothes and had only one cotton blanket, and still froze? Besides, if I opened the window the

jangle of noise was unbearable. West 48th Street was a peculiarly musical street. Phonographs, musicians, vocalists—what have you—all bent on making me laugh; and I was in no mood to laugh . . . "Are you sincere . . .?" they warbled. And "Will you love me all the time . . .?" There are certain times when funny things are acutely painful. Knock your funny bone on the corner of your desk, and you'll see what I mean.

Believe it or not, I almost never thought of Needy. He was on the other side of the world. He was dead as far as I was concerned. Mostly I couldn't even remember what he looked like.

Christmas came. The windows of the stores in New York left my brain dull and weary. Dirty Santa Clauses ringing harsh bells by the subway stations. Christmas trees piled up, naked, outside grocery stores. Everybody pushing and elbowing, and laughing; or nervous and cross and tired.

I wished Eddie would write. But I didn't hear from him. He owed me more than three letters by then. Not that it mattered, for I wouldn't have been able to read his writing anyway. . . .

Christmas Day I gave myself a present. I had been saving for it quite some time. And planning on it. I took a Turkish bath. With most of the fixings. It's quite a career to keep clean in a rooming house, and I had been too busy and too tired to try much. But the woman in the Turkish bath was rough.

And uncouth. Her Nordic humor in regard to my "condition" gave me a nasty disposition. I'm not squeamish, but I do think there are times when a lady ought to be nonchalant. She swore I was going to have twins, and that gave me a *double* worry. She shook her head fretfully as she pointed out that I was something of a pee-weezer and really wondered if I could ever pull through. Then she entertained herself telling me about her sister's Cæsarian operation. That made me feel ill. I got a good look at myself for the first time, and that made me feel iller. I felt as if I must be walking around in someone else's skin. (Or is it someone's else?) I wondered how anyone had ever called me pretty. Or if they'd ever call me pretty again. How did everything ever get back into place? What sort of a creature was it, anyway, that was caged up inside of me? Did it feel as badly as I? Would it just as soon have called the whole thing off? I was glad, suddenly, that Needy was in Europe. I'd rather not have him see me this way. How do husbands ever live in the same room with wives who look like this —and how can they ever feel in love with them again? How can the women feel the same, for that matter? Why did everyone take it all for granted; and why could nobody give any sane understandable advice?

Even religion didn't do much about it, as far as I could see. They talked about the sanctity of moth-

erhood; and then said we were all conceived in sin. It doesn't make sense. Christ attended the wedding supper, but all He did was change the water into wine. Maybe that makes sense. Certainly He didn't give any advice to the bride and groom. . . . Which probably showed remarkable understanding of human nature. I've always found it unwise to give advice to married people.

Anyway, I've never been able to understand it. I've learned how to play bridge; I've learned the difference between selling short and buying on margin. So I'm really not a dullard. I have as clearly illogical a mind as any woman. But on that particular subject I'm all at sea. If anyone would care to enlighten me, I hereby offer my house on the Rive Gauche in Paris for the winter season, to the best letter I receive within five months after this book appears. Just address my publishers; but be careful how you address them, because they happen to be very genteel.

Well anyway, the Christmas present wasn't so hot, except for the steam room, where I stayed an interminable time, simply because I hadn't been warm in weeks.

After the Turkish bath, I worked all Christmas day on an extra job I'd taken. Addressing envelopes. Have you ever sat and addressed envelopes for three dollars a thousand? Do you know how many

is a thousand envelopes? Oh well, I have my own secretary now. . . .

I had dinner that night with one of the other ushers in the theatre. She lived alone too. Came from Texas, but it must have been a bum steer that sent her to New York. She was fairly nice. We had red ink with the dinner, and probably because of it, I told her about myself. Not my past, but my all-absorbing future. That I was going to have a baby and didn't know what to do.

"Why, you poor slob," she laughed softly, "I've known that for some time. I've been waiting for them to fire you any minute."

"And what will I do—if they fire me?"

"If? You mean, *when* they fire you," she shook her head wryly. "Well, the first thing I'd do is buy myself a wedding ring. When do you expect it?"

"I don't know, really . . ."

"What do you mean you don't know? Nix on that jingle, kiddo. What did your doctor say?"

"I haven't been to a doctor."

She stared at me, and pursed her lips.

"Well, then *that's* the first thing, I'd do," she said, with a shrug, and got up to put on her coat.

I followed her example, though I dreaded to go out into the cold so early. We talked of the weather until we reached the theatre. But I realized the girl was giving me what was known as the cold shoulder.

The theatre was fetid that night. I felt ill. Too long in the steam room, I suppose. The Turkish bath had been too strenuous. I wasn't used to being so clean, maybe. Anyway, during the second act, I fainted.

And that was the fall of the Usher of the House.

They had a nearby drug-store doctor come to look me over. He did, plenty. He asked me quite a lot about myself and heard very able lies. I was truthful only on the subject of my poverty. He wrote the name of a hospital down on a card and put it in my purse. It was a place where unmarried mothers could have their babies, if they were put to it. He took me up to my boarding house on the street car, and I guess he talked to my landlady, for she was never the same sweet gal after that.

I stayed in bed for two days, except to get up at night and go out for something to eat.

I was sick.

Eventually, I went to the address the chemist had given me.

I didn't like the looks of the place from the start. You wouldn't, either. But there was no turning back. I went in and saw a red-headed man who turned me over to a black-headed woman, who made me sit and wait to see a white-haired man with spectacles. He told me to come back the next day during regular hours.

Next day I went back. Neither the red-headed

man, nor the black-headed woman, nor the white-haired man with spectacles was there. Instead, I saw a nurse with two double chins, and a doctor with a bandaged thumb. The doctor with the bandaged thumb told me to wait. I waited for two hours. Then a nurse with very red cheeks came, and asked me who I was, and what I was doing there. I told her, and she said, "Oh, you'd better wait, dearie." So I waited some more.

So then the doctor with the bandaged thumb remembered me, and marched right up to where I sat and asked me if I had been admitted. Should I know that?

Being admitted was quite a process. I took my seat at the end of a row of chairs lined up against a dark green wall outside a big black door. The door was marked Admitting Office.

I looked at the other women, and wondered if they were all having babies. If they all had known a Needy. . . . Some of them were so much sicker than I was. . . . Some of them made you wish you'd never been born. . . . Each time the big black door opened, some hapless Magdalen limped out, and another clutched her purse and marched in. Then I'd move up a seat. It took me one hour and twenty minutes before I got to the first seat outside the big black door. My heart was beating—wondering how it felt to be admitted, and what would happen. . . . I thought the big black door would never, never

open, but it did. Out came an admitted Magdalen, and behind her came a tall woman in a black dress that had a stiff white collar and a big gold brooch. She looked as if she had never tasted home cooking.

She glanced at the line of chairs and its few remaining occupants and turned to me. My heart jumped. (Was I to be admitted in public? After all, let me have some pride. . . .!)

"I'm sorry, miss, but we're closing now. You'd better come back at ten in the morning."

I nodded.

I got up stiffly, and walked out. I wanted to take a long, long walk, but it was too cold. I headed for home. On Sixth Avenue I passed a pawn shop, and looked in the window for a ring. There were plenty. I went inside and asked to see a wedding ring. A tired, old, bearded man with a black cap on his head nodded, sniffed, coughed, used his handkerchief, called back of the shop to somebody named Miriam, and then unlocked a glass case. He took out a tray of wedding rings. He was very bored. Didn't even look at me. I couldn't help wondering how they had all landed in that shop. Who hocked wedding rings?

He blew on them. He wiped his glasses and held one up to me. He started at twenty dollars. I picked one finally that was seven. Because it was the cheapest he had that fit. I didn't have seven dollars and showed him so. I had exactly four dollars and sixty-three cents. He took it, down to the three coppers,

and handed me the ring. It fit and that was the main thing.

First it felt funny. It looked like hell. It was a big fat wide one, just baldly gold. And my hands were so chapped and cracked and boney. . . .

The ring brought me luck. Next morning at ten o'clock I was back at the hospital, and the tall woman in the black dress, that had a stiff white collar and a big gold brooch, saw me right away. Bang, efficient-like, I was inside the big black door.

"What is your name?"

"Dora Macy."

"Mrs.?"

"Oh, yes."

"Where's your husband?"

"Dead."

"What was his name?"

"Tom Macy."

"Where did he die?"

"In—Europe."

"Well, where?"

"England, London."

"When?"

"Two months ago."

"What did he die of?"

I fidgeted, nervously. Would this go on forever? Or was it just a game? I've since met people who asked questions as a parlor sport. Human nature is a riot!

"Why, he died of—pneumonia."

"Umm. Where was he buried?"

"Same place."

"When were you married?"

"June of this year." (Well, that's when I should have been married!)

"Where?"

"In Philadelphia."

"Have you your marriage certificate?"

(Ah-hah! Score one for the lady in a black dress with a big stiff collar and a big gold brooch!)

"No'm."

She looked up and tapped her teeth with the tip of her pen. They were very yellow teeth.

"Mother and father alive?"

"No."

"His mother and father alive?"

"They're in Europe, in England. In London."

"I see," she said, brusquely. And she reached over and banged a silver bell on her desk.

She scrawled busily on a piece of paper while she waited for some miracle to happen in response to the bell. The nurse with two double chins came in.

"Take this young woman to Dr. Thaddeus," said the tall thin woman in a black dress with the big stiff collar and the big gold brooch. "Give him this note."

I followed the lady with the double chins out of the big black door.

When you're with a nurse with double chins, you don't have to wait. You get right in to see Dr. Thaddeus, and you find he is the doctor with the bandaged thumb. The nurse with the double chins retired, and the doctor with the bandaged thumb took one good look at me, after reading the note.

"My dear young lady," says he, very serious like, "we have no time to listen to long rambling stories that don't make sense. You know you didn't tell the truth to Miss Humphrey."

"No—it wasn't the truth," I admitted sulkily.

"Don't you know——" he began.

Then he stopped and answered a jangling phone. He sassed back at that receiver for several minutes while I tried to measure a possible escape through his glass door.

"Don't you know," he turned back to me as he slammed up the telephone, "that we have to know who to notify in case anything happens?"

I cleared my throat.

"You mean—if I die?" I was always quick witted that way.

He nodded and pushed his teeth with his tongue.

I hadn't thought much of dying up to that moment. The thought busied me for some seconds.

He rose and came over to me.

"Besides, you're not ready to be admitted yet," he laughed. "Haven't you been to a doctor at all?"

I shook my head.

"Well, strip and I'll examine you. Seems to me you'll have a good four months yet."

"Four months!" I gasped.

"Yes."

"Oh—I thought it would be about three. Maybe three and a half."

He laughed shortly.

"Go in the next room. You'll find the nurse there. She'll get you ready."

"What are you going to do to me?"

"Nothing."

"Then, does it have to be done?"

"Don't you want to know if you're up to snuff? Don't you want to know how things stand? We do—if we intend to take you in as a patient."

"I suppose so."

"Not married, are you?"

"No."

"Only one fellow?"

"Yes. Only one."

"Well—let's see what's what. We'll talk about procedure later. You'll tell me the truth, won't you? It makes it easier all around. We're really quite decent, and we will protect you and your secret every way we can. But there are certain amenities, you know. . . .

"Oh, but I don't want—an operation.'

He laughed shortly.

"You couldn't have an operation now if you

wanted to. I mean—there are certain considerations."

"I see." (But I didn't.)

"The nurse is waiting."

When I left that hospital a half hour later, I felt cheap and naked and ashamed. The doctor with the bandaged thumb had been nice. Decent, and no nonsense, perfectly business-like from start to finish. But to be handled and talked about—like some object . . . like a butcher handles a rump of beef on a slab. . . . To be considered, and fingered and probed and discussed and made notes on. . . .

I felt outraged, somehow. So humiliated that I would gladly have crawled under the bed. Any bed. The words they used! The things they knew! The awful, meaty, white-livered words! The smells; the bowls and basins, and shiny terrifying things, the gauze and the rubber gloves. . . .

And that was only an examination. In four months there would be more. Probably much more. . . .

What could I do from now till then? Four months. Fifty dollars in the bank, and fourteen dollars tied in a handkerchief in my purse. People, people all around and not a soul to speak to. I know how the Ancient Mariner must have felt about his water.

Why was it (can any bright little boy or girl tell

me?) that I never even considered suicide? Didn't even occur to me! As I understand, from reading the classics and the Sunday magazine section of the *American,* almost every wayward girl at some time or other ponders on the choice of the river, or poison for the cat.

I walked home, painfully slow; went into my room, lit the gas, looked around, and walked out. Went four blocks to a place I knew and bought myself a huge hot-egg sandwich and a glass of beer. Then I went into a Nicklodeon, and saw entertainment. It was a rather grand entertainment. I saw, to the accompaniment of a jangling mechanical piano; first, an advertisement of a corset manufacturer flashed on the screen. Next came the tempting announcement (in colors) that I could buy a $1,000 lot at some place in Long Island for $10 down and 50 cents a week. A good proposition, but beyond my ken. Then came an unsteady flash "ONE MOMENT, PLEASE." What some people call a moment is time enough for the mechanical piano to be turned off, and three mealy-mouthed musicians to come in and tune up. Then came the flash on the screen,

FOR SALE, A WIFE

I settled myself more snugly and wished I had some peanuts. Everyone around me seemed to have peanuts and they smelled good. The reel depicted,

in a manner unmistakable, the growth of love in the heart of a wife for another man. Something which did not interest me even remotely. Besides, the lady was fat. The husband so unfortunate as to have lost his wife's affection, was a victim of tuberculosis. The lady plainly rejoiced at her husband's agonizing end, and busied herself kissing her lover while she was still another's.

Maybe it taught a lesson.

Then came a grand comedy of John Bunny, but I couldn't laugh.

After which, the pianist played soulfully, while a girl in a yellow hobble skirt sang *"Rings on my fingers and bells on my toes,"* during which colored slides were thrown one after another (and some upside down) on the white sheet.

They started to show another zowie entitled OUT OF THE DARKNESS. I stayed to see a man forget his troth for a pure girl and throw his adoration to a harlot, see an enraged rival shoot him with murder in his eyes. . . . And then I left.

I went home and cried myself to sleep. Everyone has a certain number of tears to shed in a lifetime. I got most of mine over with at a very young age. Which was an advantage. Nobody who's going to lead a gay and wicked life can afford to go around red-eyed.

A letter from Eddie the next morning revived me somewhat. But its contents were staggering. He

said he had left home three weeks before, and had been too busy to write. He was in Wilmington, and extremely excited over a job he was putting through. It would take perhaps a month, but by then he would be in New York with wads of money—enough to buy a house and lot, and Stanley White Steamer, (perhaps I should have a glossary in the back to explain this was an automobile in those days).

I wrote Eddie immediately, suggesting a ten dollar bill presto, in preference to the wads within a month. Ever the practical person.

But Eddie must have taken it as a joke.

Next night was the end of 1909, and I wondered how mama and papa felt with Eddie and me at large. All New Year's Eve I stayed in my room, me and my ham sandwich, and listened to the noise. I sure missed having a busy-body. (Glossary again —that's a window-mirror arrangement Philadelphians use to see what's going on in the street. People in Philadelphia like to know what's going on in the street. Ever since they heard about Paul Revere in Boston.)

Tragedy is the fire that scars or purifies. It didn't do much of either to me. Maybe I exaggerate; maybe those next four months weren't a tragedy. It's all a matter of opinion. And the custom of the country. At any rate, I'm not going to bare my soul

any more. It's the only thing I haven't bared in my life, and I must stick to my principles. Soul-baring is a housewife's prerogative; and no matter what the census-taker writes down, I'm no housewife.

Besides, I've told you enough for you to get a general idea how unwedded mothers get that way. If you're a woman, you've probably "been all through it" (with benefit of clergy, I hope); and if you haven't, ten to one you will, before you're much older and sassier. If you're a man, what the hell do you want to know further details for anyway? You've known all about it ever since you sprouted thirty-six good sound teeth. You probably know more about it than any woman in these here parts. Most men do. They particularly know how instantaneously and completely mothers forget their agony as soon as they've asked if it's a boy or a girl. Yes, indeed; I wouldn't be telling you anything. . . .

Stanton, crack some more ice, and get a fresh bottle of White Rock, like a good fellow. . . .

Anyway, the main point is, that Needy became a father on the third of April, 1910. The father of a boy (nor was he bouncing, I'll have you know). Not that Needy knew anything about it. Neither did I, for several days. After which, I was merely strangely relieved it wasn't twins, and closed my eyes again.

I was horribly disappointed. Wretchedly, miser-

ably, bitterly disappointed. During the last four months (and anyone who says the first hundred years are the hardest is crazy—the final stretch is *always* the toughest) I had come to hope I would die. I didn't want to commit suicide, but I did hope I'd die a good all-around natural death. I hoped the baby would die, too, to keep me company, and thus solve a number of problems. I still hoped to die. I did my damndest not to live, for more than a week. It's the one thing I've really failed in, that I've ever attempted to do.

The place where my son was finally born (after much panic of discussion and choice) is nobody's business, and I don't think they'd care for the publicity. It wasn't luxurious, even with your eyes closed. They didn't make you feel at home, exactly. But God, they were good to me. They took me in two months before, and had let me stay there, dusting and sewing and book-keeping my way through the long days leading up to the big dramatic finish. That was all the payment they asked, and take it from me, they were kind and considerate and gentle. The place was warm, the room I shared with another (bent for the same goal) was clean and neat. The food was hot and nourishing, if not fancy. Many's the check I've sent to that same address in later years. Even tainted money can do good. Besides, those good nuns don't know it's tainted. (Who does know when money is tainted?) Many's the

time, too, I've ridden by that big red-brick building. . . .

It was mean of me, I suppose, to make such a point of trying to die. It put everyone to so much more trouble. But I really couldn't figure out what else to do. I didn't know where to go. And if anyone told me, I wouldn't have been interested. After all, I was pretty sick. I ached; here, there and everywhere. I was frightfully weak, and there was a continual ringing and dingling in my ears.

When they brought me my baby, I just looked at it. I couldn't get up any enthusiasm. I was afraid of it. It didn't seem human. The baby didn't look at me. Its eyes rolled around, crazily, in its head. They say all babies' eyes do that at first, until they get focused. It's not very pretty to look at.

They took the baby away, and I tried some more to die. What was there to live for? Why was I born? (Even Helen Morgan asks that!) Why had the baby been born? What did *it* have to live for? Where could I go with it? How could I take care of it?

They brought my baby to me over and over again. Talked to me. Talked a lot to me. I didn't hear much of it. They tried to make me nurse it. The doctor was very insistent about my nursing it. What business was it of his, anyway? They all boss you—your own body doesn't belong to you.

I nursed it. The process appalled me. I looked at the queer animal at my breast—so red and so awfully tiny, making such grimaces. . . . Maybe my mind was deranged, I don't know. They say it's a beautiful procedure. But I screamed! The baby was a parasite—it wanted to feed on me! I became hysterical.

They took the baby away and gave me a needle. Afterward they said the baby got sick. I hope the doctor was satisfied.

Several days later, one of the nuns came and talked to me. She said the baby was very frail. That except for the remarkable ability of the doctor, it wouldn't have lived at all. My baby seemed to be fighting for life, and they were doing everything to pull it through.

I gazed at her thoughtfully. My baby didn't want to die, like I did. It was trying to live! Maybe it would be sorry some day—but surely it ought to have a chance. . . .

For the first time, I talked. The nun suggested several places for me. Several people. I couldn't face it. I just wanted to be let alone. I wanted terribly to be let alone.

That evening she came and talked some more. She offered to take the baby—for adoption. They were wonderfully careful about whom they let have their babies. It would get a good home eventually,

and in the meantime, perhaps I was right. It would have better care from the nuns than I could give it.

All right, I said. Yes, that's the best way.

I began to feel a little better after that. It was one problem solved—the biggest one. After all, if the baby would be well taken care of, I didn't care where I went or what I did. Neither did anybody else, except the kind nun. And she cared too much. It bothered me. I didn't want to be bothered. I didn't want to be bothered about where to go with a baby, and how to pretend I really was a Mrs. To be bothered wondering if the poor kid would look at his mother some day with shamed eyes; feeling I'd given him a rotten break. I couldn't stand that. Some day he would ask where was papa, and I'd have to think up more lies. . . . "Darling, your poor dear daddy died two months before you were born. . . . Run over by a truck. . . . Wasn't that a coincidence? . . . He was such a good man and would have been so proud of you. . . ." Then he'd probably ask what papa had been doing in front of a truck. . . . Children always ask questions far beyond you. . . . Or picture me showing him the big, ugly red-brick Charity Hospital and saying, "Look, Sonny-child, there's the darling little homestead where you were born . . . X marks the spot. . . ." And maybe some day he'd get sore and say he didn't ask to be born. So many kids do say that. And I couldn't very well answer, "Well, I didn't ask for

you to be born, so we're both in the same fix. . . ." Could I? . . . No, I couldn't. . . .

Two days later, the nun came in again with a lot of papers. She already knew my real history; had all the records. She explained over and over that I was giving up all claim to the child. It didn't make any impression. I just nodded. Anything she said, went. I was too weak to sign them, but I signed the next day. That was no sin, as sins go. . . . I figured it all out when I flopped back on my pillow. . . . No sin, really to give away a child; especially when it's best for it. Especially when you really can't keep it. . . . Moses said for children to "Honor thy Father and thy Mother." . . . He didn't make any rule for parents' behavior toward their children. Moses knew where to call a halt. . . .

Resting back on the bed, I tried to explain things to myself. I just had a baby. Now, I haven't got a baby. Look, nothing up my sleeve; now you see it, now you don't! . . . They were going to write to Needy's folks . . . maybe *they'll* take the baby. . . . Gosh, it hurt me to laugh. . . . I didn't know you laughed that far down. . . .

That afternoon, the nun came in again. She explained (Oh, what a calm untroubled voice she had!) that they had baptized the baby as soon as it was born because they feared it would die. But now they wanted to baptize it again, and give it a name. Did I want to call it anything special?)

I pulled myself up on my elbow and stared at her.

"Yes," I said. "Call it Needy."

And then I laughed. Even though it hurt so far down, I laughed. I couldn't help it. They thought I was hysterical, but I wasn't.

They gave me some horrible stuff to drink. Spirits of ammonia, probably. A hell of a way to snuff out a good joke.

But they never asked me again. A long time later, I found out they called it Charles.

I was in bed nearly two weeks. It took me three days to learn how to walk. And I was around and about for four days, and then I couldn't bear it any longer. The nuns and even the doctor kept insisting I wasn't strong, but I wanted to get out. I had to go. If I *was* to live, I wanted to get away from there. I had served my term.

Exasperating how much they made of it. I had to sign a lot more papers. I had to promise a lot of things. They wanted to know where I was going. They were so aggravatingly kind. I wouldn't go anywhere they'd suggest. I insisted, with more and more strength, that I just wanted a room—all to myself. And if possible, I wanted a room with sun. I wanted a room with sun dreadfully.

We picked one out of the newspaper ads. Nine dollars a week. On Riverside Drive, no less. They actually sent somebody over to investigate, and to explain to the landlady that I wasn't well, and ar-

ranged with her to serve me something to eat. Milk and eggs and toast, and things. She said she would do it for ten dollars a week, if I paid for the milk and eggs and toast and things.

I accepted that plan. I'd have accepted anything right then. I still had the fifty dollars in the bank. Before the baby came I had made a will leaving the fifty dollars to Eddie. But I didn't die. So Eddie was out fifty dollars, and the landlady on Riverside Drive was going to get it for climbing up to a room with sun, with milk and eggs and toast and things.

That much being settled, I felt better. The thought of being in a human every-day bed, and in a room alone, where no kind people in black costumes would come in, and no doctors would shake their heads over me, made me feel eager. . . .

A few days later, I went through the last (and most degrading) process. I had my milk pumped out of me with a funny suction pump. It made me sulky and sullen and nervous all over again. It gave me a nasty disposition. The doctor shrugged and said I was lucky I only had to have it done once. He said I should take citrate of magnesia every day for a week and that would finish up the job.

When it was time to go, the air and the sight of the street at their front door made me feel peculiar. They insisted upon getting me a taxi. And having a doctor go over with me. (They wouldn't send a nun, because they had been thoughtful enough

not to let my Mrs. Riverside Drive know where I was really coming from.)

The taxi was the last straw. I couldn't stand it. I took off my big wide wedding ring and gave it to the nun. I made her take it, insisting until my cheeks were all hot and red. She did, finally—as an offering. She begged me to come back and see her—and the baby. I knew I'd never do that. But I promised to let her know when I got well and strong. . . .

I left that hospital on my seventeenth birthday.

III

I STAYED in that sunny room on Riverside Drive for two solid weeks, wearing my brain in a sling. I'd probably be staying there yet, if it weren't for four things.

First, my money was giving out. Money has a way of doing that. I've often wondered if Houdini was smart at getting out of debt.

My landlady was swell elegant. I'll call her Mrs. Howe, and you won't know the difference. She was middle-aged (I think she must have been born middle-aged); she was kindly, she knew a lot about girls, and she was human. She even brought me marmalade along with the toast and didn't charge me for it. If it hadn't been for the fact that she wanted to talk, and ask a million questions I could have adored her. She was the kind of a woman who put on her glasses to answer the phone. At that we became genuinely friendly. As friendly as you can be with anyone you never confide in. I just gave her a bull-and-cock story, and very little of that; and she filled in the gaps with wise nods.

The room was my idea of heaven. Big, spacious, old-fashioned third-story room with a huge bay window overlooking the Hudson River. I sat there for hours, just wishing I had enough money to stay in that room until I was gray-haired. I didn't go outdoors for the whole solid two weeks. Sometimes, I'd put on my coat, and sit beside the open window until I'd fall asleep. I slept most of the time. And ate what Mrs. Howe brought in to me, and listened to her stories about her roomers, and about the empty room which was just back of mine. Then I'd look over the newspapers she brought me, and marvel that so much was going on in the world.

I almost never thought about things, because there was so much to think about. About the only real thinking I did, those days, was in Mrs. Howe's bathroom. She had a gorgeous bathroom—big and warm with plenty of hot water and towels. It was such blissful utter luxury to be able to take a bath again. And to find myself no longer distorted and ugly. *My body belonged to myself again.* Slowly, I began to realize that, and ponder on all it meant. It was mine—the only thing I had. The only thing in the world that belonged to me.

The bed in my room was grand too. Old fashioned and soft, and so big and protecting. Sometimes, I'd lie there all day. Just glad to lie, and be alone. With a delicious, indescribable lassitude—as

if I weren't in the world at all; the world just happened to be around me.

Then the second thing happened. One of those peculiar miracles. Like Oscar Wilde, I don't believe in miracles; I've seen too many of them.

I heard laughter. I was lying in bed around five o'clock one evening. I'd been there for hours. And then I heard laughter. Such laughter—girls' voices. Having a good time over something. . . .

Something seemed to snap in me. I sat up and listened. Eagerly. God, it had been so long since I'd heard anyone laugh like that. It reminded me of things—nice things—way, way off, far back.

I stopped. And suddenly I felt lonely and cold.

I remembered, then, that Mrs. Howe had told me delightedly, when she brought in my breakfast, that she had rented the back room. I hadn't listened or paid any attention.

The room was dark. I got up and put on the lights. Outside my lovely bay window, the last tinge of twilight was hovering over New Jersey. There were little, winking lights on the river.

I heard the voices again. Riotous. Giggling. And then—a mandolin.

Suddenly, I didn't want to be alone, any longer.

I started to get dressed. In the same old dark blue serge which I'd worn ever since I left home (Middy-blouse and skirt style, with stars on the sailor collar). My hat was unspeakable, my shoes

even worse. You wouldn't hire a maid with a coat as shabby and soiled as mine. But I put them on eagerly. I wanted to go out. I wanted to see people and things. . . . I wanted to know if the world was all right since I left it. . . .

A knock on my door interrupted the feverish brushing I was giving the hat.

"Come in," I called, and hardly recognized my own voice. I was wondering how surprised Mrs. Howe would be to see me dressing to go out.

The door opened and a girl stuck in her head.

"Hello," she greeted me as if I had known her all her life.

"Hello," I smiled back timidly.

She wasn't much older than I, and awfully pretty. In a breezy, healthy, friendly-pup way.

"Say, I hope we haven't disturbed you with our noise," she entered the room and spoke rapidly. "Mrs. Howe just told us you were sick. You aren't up and leaving, are you?"

"No," I said. "Just decided to go out to supper. You didn't disturb me. I liked it."

"My name is Marion Moore. My real name is Marion Fishhead, but I didn't like it, so I just changed it. Anyway, you know the fact and fancy of it, now. What's your name?"

"Dora Macy. Maybe I'll change mine too."

"It's a good enough name. Where are you going to supper?"

"I don't know. This is the first time I've tried to go out."

"Going with someone?"

"No. . . ."

"Oh. Well, see you again some time."

The moment she left I knew she had meant to be really friendly. She would probably have asked me to go with her. . . . I felt like an idiot.

I went out anyway. Spring in New York may not be nature's swellest shooting-match; but it was mighty sweet to me that night. I walked along the Drive, and sat on a bench and watched people. The buses . . . the lights in the houses. . . . I decided I liked Marion Moore, née Fishhead. I'd like to know her. I wondered what her roommate was like.

Presently I became too tired to think of searching for a place to eat. I went back, and Mrs. Howe gave me supper as usual. She was thrilled that I had been out. I asked her about the girls in the back room. She said one had been a school-teacher, and that Marion was on the stage. They had paid her two weeks in advance, and had an option on the room below mine (the best room in the house with its own bath) as soon as the old gent in it left. That would be about two weeks.

The subject of money gave me courage to talk to Mrs. Howe. I told her I intended to search for a job right away, and begged her to let me have my

room for another week on trust. She was awfully nice about it. Frightfully, talkatively and embarrassingly kind. You know how some women can be. The mothering kind. And mothering, when you're not used to it, can make you feel clumsy and self-conscious.

For a couple of hours after supper, I marked up the ads in that morning's *Times,* which Mrs. Howe brought me. Later, I heard the tinkling of the mandolin again in the back room, and Marion's gay, energetic voice. I wished dreadfully I could go in and speak to those girls. . . .

All the next day I searched for a job. I was trying for filing clerk. Then I tried for salesgirl. (There was nothing else I knew how to do, except perhaps, be a nurse maid, and I certainly had no desire to be near babies right then.)

When I'd get back from job-hunting, I'd be awfully tired. Mrs. Howe had to lend me five dollars at the end of three days. I already owed her a week's rent and food. She was beginning to get a worried expression between the eyes. I tried to tell myself it was just my imagination.

Finally I landed a job as a salesgirl in a big department store. The first night I dragged myself home, I threw myself on the bed and cried mightily.

Someone knocked on my door but I didn't call to come in.

Somebody came in anyway, and spoke to me. She shook me by the shoulder. It was Marion.

"For the love of God, stop that, will you?" she protested.

I sat up miserably, and put my head against her hip and just bawled.

"Quit it," she kept saying, pounding my shoulder gently with her fist. "Quit it. I can't stand it. Listen, I don't know what it's all about, but I know it isn't worth crying like that. I've been all through it from A to Z."

"Oh, no, you haven't."

"Well, have it your way. Anyway, quit it, and wash you face and come on out and I'll feed you. That's what you need. A good feeding."

She sat in my arm chair while I got into my things.

"Ethel has gone out with her gentleman-friend," she explained as she watched my every move. "Ethel Rogers is my room-mate. He's a new gentleman-friend. She's just trying him out."

I sniffed and nodded vaguely at her through the mirror.

"Did your fellow leave you, Dora?"

"Yes."

"Well, good riddance. Where did you come from?"

"Philadelphia."

"That musty old hole? Slow as molasses."

"It wasn't so slow for me."

Marion smiled broadly.

"Well, we all have to walk before we can run."

I jammed on my mangled hat, and suddenly Marion got up and came over to me. She was awfully pretty. I caught myself wishing vaguely that my sister Rita had been like her.

"Listen kid," Marion put her hand on my shoulder. "Let me stake you to a new lid, will you? That's terrible. No wonder you feel blue. You can pay me back some day—if you want to. Somebody had to stake me to things, not so long ago."

"I . . . I . . ."

"Fine. All right. Come along. We'll get the hat before we go to dinner."

And we did. A blue one that cost five dollars. In a little shop on Broadway. After that, Marion took me to a Chop Suey Restaurant on Broadway, up one flight. It was pretty, and it had music, and the food was marvellous. After a while, a Chinaman came over and greeted Marion. He seemed to know her very well, and she introduced him as "my friend Tommie, who owns this outfit." He sat with us at the table a while, and I was amazed that he talked such excellent English. After he left us, Marion explained that he had been through Columbia and was now working for a Ph. D. She told me what it was, a Ph. D.

Then, she took me back to the house, and into

her room. She gave me a blue dress that she said was too small for her. (At that, I had to shorten it and take it in. I was the thinnest female in New York, I think, at that time.) She gave me some underthings (the first I had ever owned that were silk) and "the loan" of a coat.

"When you look better you'll feel better," she argued sagely. "It makes all the difference in the world."

And it did! It was the first time I really learned that looking-right is half the battle. A man can't do anything without something in his stomach. And a woman can't do anything without good clothes on her back.

Marion had to trot off to her show, after that. She was chorusing in *"Bright Eyes"* and promised to take me to see it one night soon.

I spent the evening remodelling her dress to fit me.

Next night we went to the Chop Suey place again, only this time Ethel Rogers was with us. Ethel was tall, black-haired, slinky type, with half-closed eyes, and half-open mouth. But Ethel could see more with her half-closed eyes than Sherlock Holmes could with his magnifying glass. She and Marion had come from the same home-town in the middle west, and thence their team-up. Ethel must have been about twenty-five. She had been a school-teacher in a grammar-school back home, and had recently been

"dismissed" (with great to-do and scandal) for having immoral literature in her possession. The books were the Decameron and Nana, The Memoirs of Fannie Hill, and The Dialogues of Aretino. She loaned them to me later, and after reading them, I agreed with the school board. That was nothing for a grammar-school teacher to be onto.

Ethel had cleared out of the small town (after giving the high-school board a few remarks to think over), and had come to New York where men knew that women had breasts and no adam's apple. At least, that's the way she put it. Through introductions from Marion, she had made the grade of becoming a show girl for a gentleman named Ziegfeld who was putting on the "Follies." It was a remarkable job. All she had to do was be tall and beautiful (which God had already attended to) and walk around looking bored. Looking bored was Ethel's specialty. She found it difficult, however, to learn how to put one foot in front of the other. There was quite a trick to it. She taught Marion and me, on rainy Sunday afternoons. And I've always found it very handy.

Marion, on the other hand, had "to work for a living." She was the "pony" type; and what she didn't go through to earn her thirty-five dollars a week, should be taken up with the Board of Appeals. Her ambition was to become a great dancer. And she realized that ambition to the tune of a

thousand dollars a week before Al Smith was second time governor. She still is on and off Broadway, at various seasons. One of the stars whose shine doesn't wear off.

If anyone deserved success, Marion did. She certainly was good to me, back in 1910—and thank God, I was able to repay her for her kindness when she needed a friend most. Life is a see-saw like that, so often . . .

By the end of the month, Marion had loaned me fifty dollars cash. I paid up Mrs. Howe, bought myself shoes, and a few necessities, and got going.

I was gaining strength, little by little, and getting used to my job as salesgirl. If salesgirls at large wanted to, they could learn an awful lot about human nature. And an awful lot about other women. And an awful lot about merchandising. But salesgirls mostly are too tired to care—and after all, why should they? It happened to amuse me. My mind was clicking again, and I liked to see the wheels go round. Being at the counter, (first of gloves, then of underwear, and finally of jewelry) really was a passing show. I had a back stage and an "out front" too, and discussed it gleefully with Ethel and with Marion. Ethel remarked that the only 'out front" that interested her was a limousine with her own chauffeur out front in livery. She got it, too, along with an itch and a rash which eventually inspired suicide. . . .

I was terribly fond of Marion and Ethel. Particularly Marion, who was pretty much my own kind. They were my life. The only people, except Mrs. Howe, I knew. I revelled in their reflected glory of the stage, and adored the gossip. I never had a leaning for the stage myself. To begin with, I wouldn't have had the strength in those days to stand the life. (You really have to be made of beef, iron and wine.) Besides, I was beginning to have ideas of my own. Vague—but very determined.

I met many, many people those days. People at the store; from cash girls to buyers, from floor walkers to store detectives, from delivery men to advertising managers. Not all at once, of course, but gradually. I was with the store, altogether, nearly two years. I rated a discount there, and naturally, I purchased everything Ethel, Marion or Mrs. Howe wanted, so they could get the benefit of the discount, too.

With Marion and Ethel, I met a great many more people. Nice people; a few very very grand people (like Marion's Italian vocal teacher, and artist of considerable renown, who was an angel in pants if there ever was one!) ; and a few lousy bums (like a certain gentleman-friend of Ethel's who should have been emptying garbage cans instead of living rich by handing out hypo-needles on the sly). But there was one person I met those days who really made a dent. Who really started me thinking.

That was Tommie, the Chinaman who owned the Chop Suey place. In fact, he owned a number of them. Tommie was a gentleman, neither plain nor simple. Cultured, rich in thought and whimsie; mellowed; with a sensitive soul which he kept curtained behind a smooth shadow-like smile. Tommie, I found out bit by bit, was keeping Marion. He was a white man, in spite of his skin. Though he cared for Marion truly; but he could not marry her because his family would never consider such a match. Which was just as well, and didn't hurt Marion's feelings a tiny bit. She had ridden the bumps as furiously as I had—in a different way. She was supporting her mother and a lame kid brother back home. When she was out of a job, they were out of food. In those days, most of the white men who oogled Marion and offered her imitation pearls were what she labelled as "snakes." Tommie was gentle, he was kind, he was generous, and he loved her. He gave her everything she asked for, and would gladly have given more. Her own living expenses were just about what she earned in the chorus. Tommie supplied the twenty-five a week back home (plus numerous and worthwhile gifts post-marked to the middle-west); he supplied her money for her clothes, and most important of all, he paid for her lessons. Dancing lessons, and vocal lessons are one grand unending way of spending money, and they were air and water to Marion.

She wanted to make good on the stage. It was all she talked about. She wanted to be a star. She wanted it more than she wanted to eat. More than she wanted to sleep alone. And that, dear gentle readers, is wanting something.

Whether Marion ever loved Tommie or not, I can't judge. I know she was true to him. There wasn't ever a disloyal bone in Marion's body; and an ounce of loyalty is worth a pound of cleverness. I know she was fond of him, respected him, and looked up to him. Whatever Tommie said went. If she had a problem, she'd take it to Tommie. If she needed to know something, she'd ask Tommie. But she knew Tommie wouldn't last long. She knew he'd go back home in a year or so more. I think possibly it was Tommie who kept things off a hysterical basis. He had never suggested she live at his address. She merely went out with him, and visited his apartment. (Which, strangely enough I never got to see. I was never invited inside his door.)

But I saw a lot of Tommie, naturally, and he was the first to make me want to know things. To make me realize what an uneducated, unlettered, incompetent nit-wit I was. His speech was so perfect; his thoughts were like balloons floating over my head beyond my reach. I remember the romantic flavor of his occasional use of "august" or "lowly", or his speaking of his "aunt, eighteen times

removed"! I remember his arguing that Chinese would be the ideal language for operas; a language of vowel sounds and even its few consonants were not hard. . . . And I remember, above all, and most clearly, a verse he occasionally recited on many, many occasions, and which cast a particular spell over me. Always he translated it:

"A hundred—a thousand, ten thousand projects are hard to accomplish;
Five times—six times—ten years very soon arrive.
When you have found a day to be idle, be idle for a day.
When you have met with three cups to drink, then drink your three cups."

I don't know why that stuck like a burr in my mind. I would repeat it over and over. Maybe it reawoke something of my old spirit. Maybe it was just a polite, benign way of saying "To hell with it".

His romantic wanderings, his strange legends, were miraculous. I wish I could remember them. He had a car, and he drove us around New York, showing me things I never dreamed were there. Now he pointed out the stoop-shouldered men who gathered driftwood in the harbor to sell to wealthy people for their fireplaces, because it burned with colored flames. It was Tommie who showed me the Metropolitan Museum, and the Fraunces Tavern in lower New York where Washington said fare-

well to his officers. He laughed silently at me when I asked questions and when I wanted to know things. He gave me Rousseau's Confessions to read, after telling me how Rousseau inspired the French Revolution. At various stages, he gave me Boudelaire's Essay on Cosmetics, and Owen Wister, and Walt Whitman, and Thoreau. . . .

And once, after a bitter quarrel with Marion, he said something which I have always kept tucked away in my fly-paper mind.

"Women do not give. They lend themselves," he squinted his narrow eyes at a cordial glass. "Only one woman in each century knows how to give herself."

You can count on it, I didn't bring that message back to Marion. But I thought about it.

Anyway, for better or for worse, Tommie set me off. I got greedy and grabby for knowledge. I went to night school, and took a business course. I haunted the library. I had my face in a book half my spare time. I wanted to know things—terribly. I didn't know there was so much to learn. Or that it made such a difference. Not that I've ever had to use it, the way I planned. And of course, what little knowledge I gained those years of study is rusty, or well disguised in elaborate masquerade, for it would never do for a mistress to be a lawyer or the dean of a college. Not but what I've heard of women lawyers and women deans being mis-

tresses. But they're like two-headed dogs. Very rare, and you don't have to count them in.

It was July, and I had already started at night school, when the third important thing happened to me. I picked up a newspaper one night, to read of one Eddie Macy, alias Eddie Mack, in jail for robbery. Along with a nice gang of rough-necks, named and described. The jail was in Wilmington!

Whereupon, excitedly, I wrote to find out if it were my dear, big, freckled-faced, blond brother; and by return mail I found that it was. Poor Eddie. He wrote me such a pathetic letter. At least, what I could understand of it, was pathetic. Begging me to come to him.

I was annoyed. I was furious. And I was sore. I wrote him that *I* had served *my* term and he had never come near me. Why should I go down to see *him?* I had neither the money, nor the freedom of time. And, then I asked him, where he got the "Mack".

It was a mean letter. Troubled my conscience, and I kept remembering how he taught me to swig a mug of beer in Philadelphia, and how he had kissed me goodbye when I had run away. I went out and bought him a box of fruit and crackers and nuts and candy, and sent it down to the jail. His letter of thanks, was salty with gratitude. I sent him books. And magazines. And more food. He had six months to serve. Five with good be-

havior. Evidently this was not his first sentence since we had parted, either. We corresponded quite frequently all through his term, and I promised, when his day of freedom arrived, to send him money to come to New York.

Meanwhile, late in August, something else happened that nearly set me off my trolley (as people expressed in those days). I got a letter from the nun at the Charity Hospital. So prettily written; her penmanship was just as calm and untroubled as her voice. It seems she had been in touch with Needy's people. And Needy's father had answered, acknowledging *her* care and interest, and expressing *his* total lack of care and interest. He gracefully gave what details of information about his family blood which I had not known; and sent the nun a lovely, lovely check. I could just picture old Mr. Ross making out that lovely check. Sitting in his Morris Chair. Anyway, he advised the nun that he was not informing his wife or son of the news; and since his son was still under age he took it upon himself to fill out and sign the paternal end of all papers. Thus leaving the baby quite, quite free for adoption. He ended by praising the routine, and stressing the benefit of secrecy.

I got all steamed up over that letter. I damn near memorized it, I read it so often. There's a little bit of Irish in all of us, and my Irish was boiling. I felt like finding out where Needy was and

writing him myself about the baby. Imagine not telling the party of the second part!

When I cooled off, (which we all eventually do) I merely wrote the nun and said yes to everything, and thanked her once more for all she had done.

With these two secrets burning up my thoughts, I had to relieve myself of one. Nobody ever dreamed of telling Ethel anything. But I told Marion all about Eddie, and she mused on how it would feel to have her little brother land up in jail. She got quite concerned about it. She was feeling pretty inside-out, anyway, right about then. Two weeks later, she quit her show. The heat in that late August would have annoyed a stoker.

One day, Marion bounced into my room, her eyes all puppy-like with excitement; and said she was going to take a trip back home for a two-week's spree. Needed the change, and needed to see the folks. Would I come with her? She'd lend me the money, and I could pay her back some day. I needed to get out of town, too. We might as well realize there was another long, hard winter ahead.

Marion is always thoroughly convincing. I went down to the store and explained to my boss, hinting that he wouldn't like to have me drop on the floor behind the glove counter. I said if I had to quit, I'd have to quit, but I really hated to leave the store. He was quite nice; said something about my needing a little more flesh on my bones (which, after

all, was not his concern); and promised I'd have a job when I came back. (It was upon my return that I was put into the underwear!)

So the last week in August, Marion and I took a train for the middle west. I knew Tommie had staked us to the trip, but one didn't mention those things. I knew he had provided the shiny new suitcases, and all the bulgy-bundled presents, to say nothing of continuing the rent on our rooms back at Riverside Drive. (Ethel hadn't considered going. She didn't mind putting one foot in front of the other in the heat; and she had a gentleman-friend who never heard of the middle-west; but who owned a sailboat, which he parked in Sheepshead Bay and which Ethel "yachted" in every Sunday. When it was a choice between sailboats or virtue, Ethel wasn't niggardly.)

Marion's home town was Joliet, and the prison there prompted me to write incessantly to poor Eddie. Her mother was a little dumpling of a woman, who never wore a corset or a hat. She thought the sun rose and set in Marion (believing that Marion was Ye Rousing Success in New York, and that all the money forthcoming was bona fide and untainted). The little lame brother, Billie, was a great shock to me. There was nothing little about him. He was a great, puffy, over-grown boy of fifteen, who had to be nursed and cared-for like a helpless infant. I always become a bit goose-flesh

over invalids, and it wasn't easy to act natural with Billie. Fortunately, he took a tremendous yen for me. His eyes would follow me around, and his cheeks would become flushed with excitement when I talked to him. Poor, poor Billie, who sat and sat and sat, entertaining himself and making himself useful by shelling peas, embroidering, knitting, and picking fleas out of the dog. I used to compare him with Eddie. . . . I wondered if he had fought for life like my baby had, and I wondered why. . . .

Marion didn't know hardly anybody in the town except the minister and the doctor who came regularly to visit Billie and Ma. The minister was just a minister. The most he did was to talk to Marion about getting married and settling down. Isn't it strange how people make an aim of settling down? The Bromo-Seltzer people of the world. But I did get one thing from that minister (one can get something from almost everybody) and that was when he and Marion were having a warmed-up discussion on marriage. I was amazed how Marion knew her Bible. Anyway, during that discussion, I learned that there's a hot idea in the marriage service of the Church of England that they blue-pencilled from the ceremony in the Book of Common Prayer. "With my body I thee worship; and with all my worldly goods I thee endow." . . .

It gives you something to think about—for them as likes to think. I just mention it here, for the

fun of it. I started to read the Bible after that, but the farthest I ever got was the Song of Songs, and I thought them a bit exaggerated, to say the least. Besides, I can't believe Solomon wrote them; they must have been done by one of his fifty-seven varieties of con—(pardon me)—cubines.

The doctor was different from the minister. I had a fierce aversion to doctors, but this one made it a point to win my interest. (Men in small towns are almost invariably interested in any new female under thirty who shows up for a spell.) He was good-looking in a big lazy, indifferent way. I think middle-westerners are the friendliest people I've ever met. I haven't met many of them, but as far as I'm concerned, they're in. I care for them.

Doctor Thomas (I'll call him) began, after the first friendly approaches, to tell me I needed a doctor's care. And he didn't mean what you think he meant. He told me I was in a frightful condition and ought to build myself up. I told him to go to hell, and he thought that riotously funny. He asked me where did I get that cough in the summer time, and I asked him where did he get his big, shaggy eyebrows. Presently Marion sprouted a huge boil on her neck, and Doctor Thomas transferred his technical interest. I went with her to his queer old-timey home office and held her hand while he free-lanced it off. Honestly, you'd think Marion was

having a baby. Not that I blame her. A boil is a beastly break on a vacation.

Well, Doctor Thomas had a hoss-and-buggy, and he took us driving. He was so well liked in those parts, that nobody criticized him for doing it. After all, he wasn't married. He was a "free agent". So, no scandal kicked up any dust.

The doctor took us to Valparaiso to show us the sand dunes. I didn't know what were sand-dunes; and they got me very excited. He took us in to Chicago and showed us the town. Bought us a swell dollar dinner, and picture postal cards of the places; and then got himself some much needed supplies, while Marion and I went and shopped a bit. Marion had wired Tommie for more money on pretext of the boil. I owed Marion nearly two hundred dollars by then. . . .

I got to like the doctor. He grinned all the time, and had such a cute way of slapping mosquitoes off his face. But I saw to it that Marion was with us wherever we went. It was the first time since my earthquake that I had actually liked anything in trousers; and I liked him in spite of myself.

Meanwhile, Marion and I were having a grand vacation. It was nice to see chickens again, and they were surprised I knew what to do for the pip. I hadn't been near an honest stove in so long. I made apple cake, which Billie loved. And doughnuts and pancakes. I showed Marion's ma how to make peach

brandy, and she showed me how to mend broken plates. Then one day I got gay, and made some of the old face-cream, that mama used to assert herself about back home. It came out swell, and everybody loved it. After that I was the star of this here ranch.

Out there was the first time I got on the back of a horse. Doctor Thomas's horse. First, just on a dare, I rode up behind him. My hands clasped around his waist, so that if I fell, he came with me. It gave me ripples. Sitting so close to such a big, strong body—huge shoulders, and a powerful heady feeling of masculine strength. . . .

I got all fussed. I was sorry it happened. I didn't want to be all fussed over a man—ever again. But, boy, the old urge was there. The tug of sex. . . .

I didn't get to learn to ride much. Just learned to love the damned hoss, and caught some of Doctor Thomas' fever about equines. He really should have been a cavalry officer. No doubt if he were, and had a uniform, I'd have gone nuts about him.

Anyway, our vacation came to an end too soon. That hungry stone-crusher, New York, was missing its little pebbles. We had to say goodbye. And shed a few tears. And take paper-boxes of home-made lunches. And some of Billie's knitting (he had rushed through sweaters for us both; and mine was red and what does that mean?). But before I left, Doctor Thomas gave me a talking to.

"You need to take care of yourself," says he. "Or you'll end up anemic. And you're far too pretty, and too young, and too nice."

I jerked my hand out of his.

"Oh, write it to me in a letter," I shrugged, "and what's the idea of getting so personal? Is this your bedside manner?"

"Now who's getting personal?" he grinned back. "My bedside manner is my own affair—at present."

So I laughed. But I didn't feel so romantic about him after that. Doctors know too damn much. Just the same, I did listen to him, when he talked of rest, and sleep, and no drinking, and taking walks.

And then he told me about enemas. After that I didn't feel romantic about him at all.

And it didn't affect me in the least to say goodbye.

IV

BACK in New York there was no Ethel Rogers. She had gone off with her gentleman friend. She was away for a month.

Marion was busy taking up the grind again; looking for a job and seeing Tommie.

New York never knows when summer is over. It was still hot. But I felt refreshed. Doctor Thomas' words kept harping at me, and I began to take care of myself. I began to realize I was pretty—and young—I really hadn't thought about it for some time. I went down to the store and took up my job again—on the underwear—and went back to night school. I quit any kind of drinking. (After all, beer and wine only made you hotter, anyway.) I even laid off chocolates quite a bit.

Time slithered along. Marion got a job, but it wasn't what she wanted. She started in with her lessons again, and her pains and aches. I used to rub her with alcohol and vaseline until my arms ached. Her new show was strenuous. She used to come home and cry:

"What in God's name do they want? I only have one pair of legs!"

Which was always a catch-phrase in our littl- circle.

Ethel came back, and prepared to go on the road with her last Follies. (I mean her show.) Her gentleman friend had bored her. But she had a lovely fur-trimmed coat, a Scotch Terrier, a perfectly darling muff, and nice color in her cheeks. She seemed to have a little cash to spare, too; but she never spared Marion or me any of it. Ethel always went dutch treat, and with her dutch treat was gutteral. She did "pay me" for doing things, though. Mending and altering things, and making-over things. To say nothing of messing up batches of cold-cream. Marion had loved my cold-cream back home so much, that I made it all the time from then on. We all three used it. It was nice and cheap. Ethel also paid me for writing letters for her. She hated to write letters. Also Marion raised hell about the Scotch Terrier, so I kept it in my room until Ethel went on the road.

I wanted to use the money I got from Ethel to pay back Marion, but I couldn't. I was saving for Eddie's approaching release from jail. Marion understood.

"Oh, the devil with it," she'd say fretfully. "You remind me of all the money I owe other people. I just manage to forget my own debts when you get

all conscience stricken over a few dirty dollars and upset me all over again."

Doctor Thomas wrote me, and his letters boiled and steamed with each new installment. They made me feel awfully good. Important, and admired. Finally he wrote one in which he begged me "when I was tired of excitement and the high-life, to come on back to Joliet and marry him." He even threw in a horse as an inducement. Marion said too bad he didn't enclose it. It would have been useful; we could at least have sold it. Just the same, that proposal in black and white was like a coronation ceremony to me. I almost framed it. After all, Doctor Thomas was of age, and he really meant business. Marion vouched for that. I got to feel romantic about him all over again (which is easy to do with men you're just corresponding with); but I never considered marrying him. I couldn't even bear the thought of being tied daily to a doctor. But the thought of his loving me and being ready to jump in and dust up the horizon, kept me steady as one man after another tried to make me. (I'm not boasting; they were just "gents", the kind a girl alone can't help meeting.)

Finally came the rainy, muddy, blowy day when Eddie arrived in New York, looking like last year's hat. I sent him to a barber for a shave, a half hour after I met him. Simply could not present him to Marion in that condition. I had taken an attic room

of Mrs. Howe's for him, and had a nice line of jobs marked out in the *Times* for him to hoof after.

But Eddie was sick. He didn't have to tell me. I could see it was more than just hangnails; so I got him up to the attic room and sent for a doctor. The doctor wanted to cart him off, but Marion and I jawed him out of the idea. So the M.D. told Mrs. Howe all about it, and she got timid. I staged a scene. My brother—the only person I had in the world! I staged a beautiful scene—wept and clung close to her and reminded her she once had a brother. Then, for the grand climax I offered to pay double for the room, and engage a fumigator. So she let Eddie stay.

Poor Eddie had evidently got T.B. at the prison and he was sick for months and months. He was *that* grateful for my care—at the time. I felt so god-damned glad to have someone who loved me and wanted me and needed me. Somebody that wasn't a stranger. He suffered horribly at first. I cooked all his food, and trotted the four flights of stairs to his room from Mrs. Howe's kitchen, and fed him egg-nogg and gave him hell for getting into such a fix. I washed all his dishes with disinfectant and burned sulphur candles. I gave up night school for five weeks until he was half way out of the worst. Of course, Marion never went up to see him; and for a while she saw very little of me. Only natural protection—no harm meant and no ill feelings.

Christmas came, as Christmas will, right on the twenty-fifth of December. Having Eddie with me had brought back so many things, and I took a chance and wrote a letter to Mama.

Marion made a little splash about Christmas. So did Mrs. Howe. We even decorated the house a tiny bit; got a skinny tree and fixed up the windows. Wreath them and weep. . . .

I had opened a charge account down at my store. God help me! That was my first charge account (I had been there long enough for them to know me!) and I've been using the sign language ever since. Signing for this and signing for that! But only in that way could I get a kimona for Mrs. Howe, a bracelet for Marion, a new warm coat for myself (which I had to have or give up the ghost) and things for ma and Billie back in the middle-west.

It was a damn-sight nicer Christmas than 1909.

My letter to mama came back to me unopened, and enclosed in a big envelope addressed in papa's well-known writing.

I felt pretty bad. Eddie said, "Oh, to hell with it." And then I didn't feel so bad.

But a week later I got a letter from mama! She had seen my return address on the back flap of my note!

Her letter was so excited. She had grieved out her heart, she said; and wanted to know about her girl, and if I had heard from Eddie at all. Papa had

rheumatism, and times were hard. She was taking a post-office box, and would I please write her there and tell her about everything.

I wrote her to the P.O. box gleefully, but I didn't tell her about everything. I just skimmed the surface. Told her Eddie was with me, and had a bad cold and I was taking care of him. Told her about my job, and asked a lot of questions. Her next letter asked if I was a good girl. I wrote back and said I certainly was a good girl. After that, we corresponded pretty regularly for a long, long time.

The surprise of my life, however, came three weeks after mama's first letter.

I had a visitor at my rooming house. A visitor, already waiting in my room when I came home from work one evening. (Probably had been snooping around everything I owned for hours, and I hope she saw Dr. Thomas' letters and had a good time.)

It was Rita!

Rita, the near-sighted, who knew so well how to spell.

What is it about folks in your own family that makes you glad to see them no matter what you really think about them? I was awfully glad to see Rita. But oh, after a half hour, how she amused, and irritated me. Ten years difference in our ages; yet she made me feel so old!

I knew so much more than she did, now!

She explained that mama had written and asked her to come to see me. I flung questions at her rapidly to give myself time to think (a trick one learns soon and early). I found Rita was still a "governess,"—to two kids who lived in the wilds of New Jersey. She had been there eight months and still liked the job. Got fifty-five dollars a month and "findings".

And before fifteen minutes were up, I learned that Rita was in love. I nearly fell over on the bed! He was such a nice man, she said. A widower with one little girl, only four years old. Maybe he wasn't so handsome, but he certainly was a fine man. A very fine man. I heard that he was a fine man at least twenty times. That's about all the description I got. Except that he was "well-to-do" and had his own business. I probed about the business, and Rita said, with pursed pale lips, that he was in the paper business. (I didn't learn till long afterward that the very fine man manufactured toilet paper. Rita always was ashamed of it, somehow; and never did admit it openly.)

Anyway, it looked very much as if Rita was going to marry him. She had taken a year and two months to think about it so far and if she hadn't come to see me, I don't think she'd be engaged yet.

I invited Rita out to dinner. She had the night off but had to be back to the wilds of Jersey by ten. She wanted to see Eddie, but I explained Eddie had

tonsilitis, and she'd better not run the risk of carrying the germs back to her little charges. She agreed with me, and gave me all sorts of messages for him. Most of them I never delivered. I knew Eddie would rather have met his God than Rita, just about then.

I studied her as I got cleaned up to go out to dinner. She was so all-fired neat and unappealing. Wore her hair in a pompadour and had a funny way of heaving her high chest. Around her throat was a high-boned net collar with a pearl pin in front. Marion burst unceremoniously into the room, and I introduced her to Rita. Neither of them liked each other. Marion left, with a wink at me, three minutes later.

While I got cleaned up and dressed for the street Rita watched me closely.

"What do you put that stuff on your face for, Dora?"

"I've got the kind of a face that needs stuff."

"It's not nice. Only loose women do it."

"Oh well, there are exceptions to every rule!" (I had learned that at night school.) "It's not nice to pick your teeth. But I do that too. In private, of course."

Rita squirmed.

"You're looking awfully well, Dora."

"Thanks. So are you."

"You're really awfully pretty. Prettier than you ever were before. I suppose you know that."

"I've heard rumors, but I don't put much stock in them."

"Dora—Before we go out. . . . It's so hard to talk in public. . . . Mama wants to know a few things. . . . You know, it's natural. . . . I'm interested too. After all, you *are* my little sister, you know . . . you really *are*. . . ."

(I are her little sister, are I? . . . Now that it's all over and past. . . . And she wants to find out about things. She and mama want to know. . . . Hell!)

"What is it you want to know, Rita?"

"About—you—and what happened—and about the baby. . . ."

"Well, what about them all?"

"Don't talk like that, Dora. You make me feel—terrible. . . ."

"Sorry."

"Did the baby—die?"

"Yes. It died."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. What a pity. Poor little Dora."

"Cut it, will you?"

"Of course. We won't talk about it. I understand perfectly. . . . Was it a boy or a girl, dear?"

I drew away from the hand she put on my shoulder.

"What does it matter? Are you ready to go? If you talk about this any more, I won't want any

dinner. Now, don't get offended. It's all over and past. I've forgotten it. And so should everybody else. Here, you've got a hole in your gloves. Take these. If they don't fit, you can carry 'em."

Rita took the gloves I held out to her, gingerly. Her big mooney eyes were filled with tears, and I felt like a dog. Like a mad dog. She started to say something to me, and only gurgled. Awkwardly, I put my arm around her. It didn't feel natural to kiss her, but I did. Pure huge virgin, in love with a very fine man . . . nearly twenty-nine years old and never lost her equilibrium. . . .

"Come on, Rita," I protested. "Let's go get fed. I'm awfully glad you came. I'm awfully glad to see you again. Truly. I think, really, we might be friends, if . . ."

"Friends!" she echoed blankly.

"Well, lots of sisters *aren't* friends. You know what I mean. Pals, then. Only there are certain subjects that have 'Keep Off The Grass' signs. See what I mean? You must have some of them yourself."

"All right," she said dully. "All right."

"Good. When you have days off, I may be able to show you some interesting things in New York. And besides, I want to hear all about your beau. Will you tell me about him at dinner? I know a nice little tea-room near here. . . ."

Maybe I wasn't relieved when Rita parted from me at a quarter to nine that evening. Maybe I wasn't glad she didn't have another "day off" for a month. Then, I was supposed to meet Mr. McManus, the paper manufacturer. . . .

I went back to my rooming house and climbed to the attic with some grapes for Eddie. . . . He listened moodily to my description of Rita. . . . And then asked for the evening paper; he wanted to see the sporting section.

Marion was having a tough break. She had rehearsed with her show five weeks. It opened out of town, trailed crazily around in the sticks, came in to New York, and closed quicker than that. Just an open-and-shut proposition! Salaries weren't paid, and Marion was tired, discouraged and sore as a bull pup. Tommie gave her a half dozen pair of stockings, and a new negligee, and she didn't crack a smile. Hell, I didn't blame her. Then Tommie went away on a trip, and I didn't blame him either.

Mrs. Howe was enjoying herself too. She received a letter from Albany saying her aunt was sick. Auntie totalled about ten thousand dollars in worldly goods, and only had one other relative besides Mrs. Howe. So Mrs. Howe felt she must drop everything to do her duty. She went up to Albany and left the house in charge of—you guessed it. I was elected. A week's room rent free, for doing it; and believe me I'd rather pay cash any day.

Marion and I chewed the rag together, and grumbled until the house shook. Cursing the world and everyone in it from here to Siam. Just two sweet little girls realizing that the one worth while is the one who can smile when everything da-dee-da-da. . . .

On my eighteenth birthday I counted up my debts, and my hair fell out. Marion and I tried to laugh it off over cold potato salad and bought fruit cake, eaten in our room. But those debts haunted me. . . . All I owed Marion, and Mrs. Howe, and Eddie's doctor, and Eddie's food, and the charge account. . . . I dreamed figures. I ate them. Every time I drank a five-cent soda I would choke, because I knew I owed that nickel to someone. . . .

Mrs. Howe wired she had to stay another week, and was I getting along all right? Had I collected from the old man in the second floor back? I wired her yes to everything. That meant another week's rent free. I put the nine dollars on the charge account. A lot that helped!

Marion was looking for another job. Looking for work was almost as hard as doing the work. Tommie hadn't written her and she pretended not to care.

Ethel Rogers did write, though. She had left her show a month ago, but we knew how she hated to write letters, etc. She was in Palm Beach with a gentleman-friend. She had met this latest gentle-

man-friend in Chicago, and he had given her a string of real pearls (trust Ethel to have had them appraised) before she had even gone away with him. We wrote and asked her to send one of the pearls. . . .

Mrs. Howe wrote a lengthy letter, too. Auntie was on the verge of death but was taking her own sweet time about it. Marion and I read between the lines. You could always do that with Mrs. Howe. You could read between the lines on her face! It was evident that if Mrs. Howe stuck to her auntie until the end, Mrs. Howe might come back with enough to provide for her old age. It might be (said she, in purple ink) a week, and then again, it might be a month, or more. But Aunty really needed her. Mrs. Howe didn't know what she would *do* if it weren't for her *darling* girl, whom she knew she could trust. . . . But *would* I send her the bank deposit slips for the weekly room rents I had collected?

I would, and did. And wrote her that all was in apple pie order, and nothing in the house was missing, not even a mouse. Then, I settled down to running her old rooming-house efficient-like. It meant room rent free, and each week I could put nine dollars in the doctor's pocket or on the charge account, depending on which barked the loudest.

Marion got a job at last, and was fired the next day for being too short. Took her three weeks to

get another—and then only by chance. She took the place of a girl who had taken ill, in a show already running. That meant only a week's rehearsal. Still not a word from Tommie. No one can be more silent than a Chinaman when he wants to be.

Meanwhile, Ethel came home. Very much in a flurry. Eyes wide open, and not at all bored. Breezed into Marion's room unheralded, around six o'clock in the evening; just as Marion and I were getting ready to go to supper.

"Don't let me keep you," Ethel said. "Run right along out and eat. I don't want any supper. Can you bunk in with Dora, tonight, Marion? I wouldn't like to disturb you."

"Are you crazy—or was it just the heat in Florida?"

"Neither. I'm caught."

"My God!" said Marion, who knew what that meant.

"I'm having a doctor here at ten o'clock. I won't make any noise. No, I don't need you. At least, I don't think so."

"Ethel, you're trembling all over!"

"Well, who wouldn't? Let me tremble, at least. Mix me a drink, will you?"

"Can't. Haven't got a drop. We're both poor as a church. And Dora's been dry for months."

"Well, for Christ's sake, bring in a bottle of

Scotch when you come," said the erst-while school-teacher, dragging out a bill from her purse.

Out in the cold air, Marion let me in on the news. She was a bit peeved that Ethel should have come home to roost, and a bit scared at possible complications. The longer we stayed away from the house, the more scared Marion became. We grabbed a bite, bought the Scotch, and hurried back. I didn't go to night school and Marion didn't go to her show. The only performance I think she ever missed. (As a matter of fact, later on in years, Marion once had the same thing done after a show on Saturday night and went back and danced on Monday! If you don't believe me, ask Mr. Foster.)

But Ethel took it hard. Ethel took anything hard that inconvenienced her. Marion and I were more greatly inconvenienced than Ethel was in many ways. Our only break was that Mrs. Howe was still away. Most of the roomers were out at that hour, and those who weren't got very convincing stories about an attack of appendicitis. . . . Only, of course, it would happen on the night I was supposed to meet Rita's paper manufacturer wouldn't it? It took me a long time to convince Rita that her feelings weren't hurt.

Maybe I didn't get a post-graduate course in sex around that time. Maybe we didn't discuss this and that and so-and-so. Maybe I didn't learn what

to use, and how to use it, and what to do if it didn't work. . . .

Anyway, Ethel had ten thousand dollars in cash, (silence comes high for some gentlemen friends) and she could afford to take it hard; to make us run errands, and get her things. It's the only time I've ever known Ethel to part with money without counting it over seven times to be sure no gold-dust was clinging to the bills. She was so damned relieved to have two people to come to, where she could be herself, that nothing was too good for us. She paid all of my doctor's bill for Eddie and said it was the least she could do. That was one worry off my mind. I gave up night school almost entirely, to sit home with Ethel and read to her, or listen to her talk. Which last was an education—of the higher sort. I felt a real attachment to Ethel. She was "one of us." I couldn't dislike her, but I never really felt close to her. She had a volcano of a temper; and her sarcasm was most disconcerting. But, often I tried to imitate her Here-Comes-The-Queen manner. I did master a few things, eventually.

I had two invalids on my hands now, both of them on the mend, of course, but still a strain. Ethel and Eddie. A swell couple! (God forbid they should ever have met!) Eddie was so well that he had taken to heart how up against it I was for money. Listened to me explain the circumstances. Then he

got all het up with ideas. Begged and pleaded so hard that I gave in. (Being, as I've said before, something of a gambler myself.)

He played the races. The first ten dollars he turned into forty; or else it would have stopped right there and then. He lost thirty, and then won a hundred and twenty-five. That's right where I stepped in. I paid up a few bills, and left him ten dollars to start all over again. He lost it, and I gave him another ten. I picked a horse myself, and damned if didn't win. Gosh, life began to have a zest to it. I understood now why I was so drawn to that old nag of Doctor Thomas' back in the middle west.

Eddie and I played the horses for two months after that. A damned fool thing to do—for it was starting Eddie right off on the wrong track again. Making easy money. Because we did make it, off and on, and surprising how frequent the batting average.

Marion joined in. She lost consistently. Tommie came back to town after that, and maybe Marion wasn't glad to see him! Maybe, after all that silence, she didn't listen when he spoke. Damned clever, these Chinese! Well, it was another worry off my mind. Marion was more her old self again.

Mrs. Howe came home too, mad as a wet hen that she was only two thousand dollars to the good. We argued that seven weeks was a passably short time in which to earn two thousand dollars, and

after all, it *was* two thousand dollars. Not everyone had aunties like that. Eventually she beamed about it. Eddie wanted to put it on the horses for her, but Mrs. Howe came from New England originally and had too much sense.

Once, I let off a little steam to Ethel, when I had the blues. I had a toy-of-destiny feeling. Wallowing in self-pity. Debts, money, debts, things I needed, where-in-hell-could-I-get-a-new-suit-for-Eddie, and what was life all about?

"Don't be a crow," Ethel snorted. "Go out and get yourself a man. How in the name of God can a woman support herself single-handed?"

"I don't know. How can she?"

"What you need is a crutch; blonde or brunette, young or old, it doesn't really matter. Gather ye rosebuds while ye may; and try and find a rosebud."

"I don't want a rosebud. And I don't want a crutch. And maybe I don't want to go through what you've just gone through. Wait, don't open your mouth so wide, you might drop something. I'm talking now. Who can guarante it wouldn't happen? You were wise, and it happened to you."

"I got ten thousand dollars out of it."

"You can keep your ten thousand dollars. Listen, you think I'm a prize dope, Ethel, and maybe I am. But I know my A B C's. After all, *mine* was actually born!"

For the second time since I knew her I saw her open her eyes wide.

"It's the truth," I nodded excitedly. "Only I didn't get ten thousand dollars out of it. I only got thin. No, I'm scared of men. When I pick one out it won't be just to pay yesterday's bills and supply tomorrow's dish of tea."

"Well, then," she said slowly, "you'd better get married. It can be done. Marion told me of someone who liked you a lot. Some country hick back home. And if you're going to marry, country hicks are very tangible."

"He isn't a hick! He's a grand person. And I could care for him, more than a little. But he's a doctor. And if I had to face biceps and forceps all my life, I'd just as soon starve."

Ethel laughed.

"Well, when you get to be as old as I am," she drawled, "you'll feel different. Oh, very different. Only make up your mind before you get haggard and wrinkled. Meanwhile, starve and see how you like it. And go to night-school and have a big hot time."

"What's the matter with night-school?" I flared.

"I don't know. I've never been to one. But I know the best night-school for you or any other poor unfortunate female is right in her own bedchamber. The best little teacher in the world, Dora, is your own mirror. You need to study *yourself,* not

the classics. I know. I had years of the classics. I even taught school! What you need to learn is how to speak and when; how to look, how not to look. What's your best colors, and the smartest line to your hat. Your nails, your hair, your eyebrows, your feet, your—Oh, God, take yourself up in a serious way and see if you can pass an exam."

"I haven't got the money to do things for myself. . . ."

"Well, if you don't do them, you never will have the money. Anyway, don't bother me about it. But speaking of money, this little panic of mine has cost me nearly a thousand dollars. Know that? I don't know where it all went. I only know I have just nine thousand in the bank instead of ten. How would you like to get your boy-wonder of a brother to play a horse for me? I'll give you ten percent of anything I win."

"All right. If I don't have to pay you ten percent on anything you lose."

She handed me a hundred dollar bill.

"Don't put all my horses in one basket," she yawned. "And by the way, make me some of that cold cream, will you? I've got Columbus Circles under my eyes."

(P. S.—Ethel won four hundred on the horse.)

I met Rita's beau not long after that, and believe me, he was some hand-out for a brother-in-law.

A little, kindly, inoffensive, well-meaning chap, who always carried an umbrella and whose fountain pen always leaked. Benjamin McManus. And take it from one who knows, this Big Ben wouldn't wake up anything. Just a nice paper manufacturer trying to get along.

I took them to dinner and bought them lobster, and then I dragged them to Marion's show. That made it easier, because then I didn't have to talk to them. Ben had pained little eyes that shifted nervously as if they didn't dare look long at any one thing. He looked long enough at Marion's legs as she danced though. I watched him closely. I wondered what his dead wife had been like. . . . Poor Rita, she was having such a good time. . . . I wondered how it felt to be in love with a man like that. . . . He talked mostly about his kid, and showed me snapshots of a nice little girl-child with three teeth out in front. Rita had already met "Aggie," and seemed to like her. Evidently Aggie had picked up her cues surprisingly prompt, and already called Rita "Mommer". Which seemed to settle everything. . . . I wondered how Rita would like being called "Mommer" right off the bat. . . . But then, kids were no novelty to Rita; she had been governessing them for years. . . .

For quite a long time after that, I didn't see Rita, though she telephoned me pretty regularly. I had

gone back to night school, and was sticking it through in spite of everything that happened.

First, Eddie and I had a run in. Eddie was getting really well, and there was no managing him. To begin with, Eddie got cocky over winning the horses. I found he was holding out on me, too, and that cut me up. Then he started staging parades in Mrs. Howe's house, and Mrs. Howe naturally objected. Day and night, a string of men would prance up and down the stair-case to Eddie's room. Bookies, and what-nots. Mostly what-nots. I didn't like them. We had a fight and the feathers flew.

There was no need of a fight. I simply wanted a question answered. I wanted to know where Eddie thought he was headed, and what he intended to do with his life. . . . I can have a nasty disposition at times, as I've hinted before, and I said things to Eddie that made his blood curdle. I asked him how long he intended to sit on his hindquarters and not use his headquarters . . . and other things. . . .

Came the dawn! One of Eddie's old pals got out of jail in Wilmington, and headed for New York. Eddie told me he was expecting him, and that he had arranged to pay Mrs. Howe extra to have his pal bunk in with him.

"That's a prize!" I snapped furiously. "What the hell do you want him around for!"

"He's my pal."

"Oh, put that to music!"

"I'm paying for it. I guess I can do as much for him as you did for me. . . ."

"I'm the one you're in debt to. Not him. I want you to cut out that gang. You're going straight from now on."

"Well, who said I wasn't?"

"You're going out and get a job. I won't have any more jailbirds around here, understand that? One is plenty."

"Aw, mind your own business. If we don't rent a room here, we'll rent it some place else."

"Go ahead. If you bring another Alias in here, I'll move out. I'll tell the detectives. I'll call up the police! Now, I mean it! You owe me to date about two hundred dollars, and I want every penny of it paid back. You go on out and earn it, you hear? You lazy, good-for-nothing bum!"

He stood beside his rickety bureau and stared at me with murder in his eyes and in the tight line of his mouth. His freckles stood out like dice-marks.

"You're gonna be sorry, talking like this. . . ."

"I've been sorry before."

"I'll pay you back your bloody two hundred. . . ."

"Well, see that you do. And I don't want any marked bills, either. I want to see you work. It would entertain me."

"I'm going to move out of here tonight. I'm going. . . ."

"Do anything you damned please, Eddie. I'm all washed up. If you aren't going to work, and if you're not going to play square, you can move out any minute you choose and nobody's going to shed a tear. If you're going to be a crook, then count me out. I don't even want to know your address. I wouldn't even identify you at the morgue."

But Eddie didn't move out that night. He wasn't the kind you could insult into action. His jailbird pal came along two days later, and I slipped a note of warning under Eddie's door. (I hadn't been up to see him since the row.) The note gave him twenty-four hours before I called the police. Not that I had anything to call the police about, that I knew of. But the threat worked, and next day when I came home from work, Eddie and his pal were gone. Bag and baggage.

Just where he had gone nobody knew, and I convinced myself I didn't care. If he didn't want to work and make a man of himself, to hell with him. . . .

Meanwhile, Marion had sprained her ankle in her show, and was recuperating at Tommie's. I called up regularly, but was never invited over. One day Marion phoned me and said Tommie and she were going to take a little run around. They went off somewhere for three or four weeks.

When she came back, she and Tommie had quit forever. No hard feelings. No fireworks. No ex-

planations. Still good friends, but the deal had been called off by mutual agreement. It didn't seem to affect Marion any. She was rosy-cheeked and gay, and feeling fit as a fiddle. Seemed to have enough money to send checks back home and take up her dancing lessons again. About four weeks later she got a break. A real part! *Out of the chorus.* It was only a road company, but Marion was thrilled. Fifty-five dollars a week and a principal.

Meanwhile life with me was pretty much of a grind. I celebrated Rita's birthday and her engagement ring in May; and gave her a travelling case as an engagement present. Poor Rita was that touched! After that I saw her and Ben about once a month or so. Whenever they came in town I jogged around with them and sizzled up as much friendship as I could inspire. They both treated me like I was an English bull . . . they thought me handsome, patted me gingerly, but were afraid at any moment that I might bite. . . . I met a few tamed parlor acrobats, occasionally (Mr. and Mrs. This, and Miss So-and-so), all pale, weather-beaten homefolks from New Jersey, and we spent dull, wholesome evenings, playing whist or ping-pong, in somebody's flat. I don't know why I ever bothered with them, except I wanted to be nice to Rita and have her like me. It was just that she was my folks, even if she did wheeze and wear ratty furs. It was nice to know they liked you, somehow. . . .

Anyway, I was pretty lonely right about then. Ethel had gone into the new Follies, and had gradually taken up with a new gentleman friend. Gosh, that girl was to men what cheese is to mice. Along about July, Ethel moved into a pretty swell apartment on Broadway around Eighty-sixth Street. So that sort of settled that. She had a colored maid, too, who was no great shakes at taking messages over the phone.

Ethel tried to be awfully nice at first. Wanted to doll me up and have me over to parties. But her crowd was too swift and noisy about it to suit me. Besides, I was still in debt and I had no clothes to keep up with Ethel, and why go further into debt when I knew her parties only would lead to trouble? So I kept rather away. Which made Ethel sore, thinking me a dud. I guess I was.

Tommie called me up several times, too, but I gave him "to understand." So that was that.

I hadn't been writing to Doctor Thomas much, because I didn't want to get him all het up, when I meant nothing. So one day, around August I got an announcement of his wedding. So I sent him and the Mrs. a present—a lovely cut-glass vase—and wondered about them. He certainly couldn't have loved me very much. . . .

Terribly I wanted someone to love me. Oh, terribly. Even Rita had somebody to love her. But I didn't just want the silly molasses love of the yaps

I met at the department store or the night school. Nor the hand-me-out love of men who tried to make me. I couldn't see any equity in sleeping around with people; or having hit-or-miss gentlemen friends. I wasn't that badly off, and I was determined never to be that badly off. I wanted a man. A real, square-shooting, he-man who would love me. There didn't seem to be any in the whole city. . . .

Maybe if it wasn't summer, I wouldn't have minded so much. . . .

That Fall I graduated from night school! With honors; whatever that meant. I knew I could be a "business woman" . . . well, anyway I could be a stenographer, at least. But just when I made up my mind to start searching for such a job, my store gave me a raise and switched me to the jewelry. Personality did it, children!

The jewelry was so exciting! God, how I loved it. Just to be near such things and handle them, and knew their values. . . . To come face to face with women who could buy them. . . . Those women had someone to love them. Somebody who made a stab at loving them anyway.

Next, I heard about a correspondence school course one of the New York seats-of-learning offered. I went up there to inquire. I met a nice man named Swan. An awfully nice man. Clean, and no nonsense, and interesting. I started in with the course, and was thrilled. Took English, and "Liter-

ature", and History. That was enough to start with. I used to go up to talk things over with Swan, he was so nice and friendly. Once we went out to dinner together in a little restaurant near the university. Then one Saturday night he took me to the Metropolitan Opera. Sitting way up there. Never heard an opera before, and Madame Butterfly is a swell introduction. I cried like a fool over her and her baby. My nose got all red, and Swan was very embarrassed. . . .

When Marion came home, she bunked in with me a while, and then we decided to move. Mrs. Howe had met up with an elderly oogler whom she thought she'd marry. We didn't like him, and we were pretty fed up with her anyway. Everyone needs a change. So we started hunting, and found two rooms for twelve dollars with a bath thrown in, down on Tenth Street. Each room had its own door to the hallway so neither had to walk through the other's quarters to get in or out. Going double, it was only six dollars a week apiece *plus* a bath! So I was thrilled. We had the use of the kitchen twice a day, too, which helped a lot.

The day before Marion and I were to move out, the greatest joy of the year was slipped under my door! An envelope in which were two one-hundred dollar bills! And a note from Eddie, ordering me to please cross his debt off my ledger. . . .

No address. No place I could reach him. Nothing

but the note and the money! He had actually taken my words to heart, and paid off his debt to me! I was so giddy with delight I couldn't see straight. From the moment I first handled the two bills, I knew they weren't honest money, by any means. Eddie was playing tricks of some sort. But why should I care? God knows I had earned that two hundred, if Eddie hadn't. . . .

I paid one bill to Marion. It completely squared my debts with her. Then I did the one thing I wanted most in all the world outside of love and an education. I opened a savings account with the other hundred dollar bill. And boy, did it make me feel independent, and safe, and sure of at least a couple of months between me and a cold in the head. . . .

The very fact that I owned some money in a bank gave me a new spurt of spirits. I studied like a fiend. I worked in the store like it was my own business. I made cold cream for Marion and her theatrical friends until my arms were stiff with the ache of beating and stirring and mixing.

That Christmas was the first I had enjoyed since I was seven. I was able to give presents to Marion, and her folks out west, to Rita and Ben, to Ethel —and then I bought five yards of lovely plum-color silk and asked Rita to send it to mama for me without letting papa know where it came from. If only

I had known where Eddie was, my Christmas would have been complete.

I got presents that Christmas too, and Marion and I had a little tree. I even got a present from Swan, who brought me down a little gold pencil with my initials on it. Swan asked me out for New Year's Eve, too. We went to Guffanti's, and then to a vaudeville show, and walked home through the crowds and the yelling. . . . It was a silly, tame New Year's Eve compared to Ethel's party where Marion went . . . but I was satisfied.

After that, Swan and I went out quite often together. Then he invited me to his home, up on Washington Heights, where I met his family. A nice sister, who played the piano beautifully; and a very nice old father who was an Alderman of his district. Their mother was dead. They seemed to like me, both the father and the sister, and after a while, I went up quite frequently.

Then, one night, Swan told me of a Professor who had a chance to do a book that a certain publisher wanted. A Professor Briggs of "English A." He needed someone to help him, but he couldn't pay much. Swan had told him that I knew stenography and typewriting, and maybe I could arrange to give him three nights a week. . . .

Poor Swan was always sorry he ever brought the subject up. The night I met Briggs was worth marking on the ice-man's calendar.

V

I DIDN'T meet Briggs until after Rita's wedding, which was too droolingly pathetic to relate in detail, to say nothing of her honeymoon in Atlantic City while little Aggie was parked with a next-door neighbor. But the moment I did meet Briggs, my conscience and I had a tussle which ended up by saying "You go your way, and I'll go mine."

Robert Whiteside Briggs (which is as near as I can come and still be a lady), was (and probably still is) devilishly attractive in a cozy table-for-two way. In a crowd, he dried up, unless he was on the lecturing platform. But when he shed his professorial tone and gesture, he bowled you over with a you-and-me-alone-and-we-can-be-ourselves manner that was the personification of intimacy. A man-of-letters with a sparkle in his eye, and a one-sided smile. An Indian profile, topped off with hair just this side of grey; huge boney hands, and shoulders as broad as a mantelpiece. His clothes were of exquisite material but thoroughly indifferent cut, and they always smelled of tobacco. Never have I

seen a grey raglan great-coat with leather buttons worn with a soft felt hat, without thinking of Bob Briggs. . . .

First we met at Swan's house, where, over a glass of mead, we discussed the subject of his book. The biography was of a lady of by-gone, happier days, whose morals couldn't hold up against her opportunities. I loved to hear Briggs talk, that night; watching the breath-taking twinkle in his eyes when referring to things better left unsaid, and listening to his comfortable, succulent laughter.

About eleven, the talk broke up, and Briggs escorted me down to Tenth Street. On the way, I learned he lived in Englewood, and had a wife and two off-springs. The wife's name was Flora, whose career, I gathered, was suffering from this and that.

I invited him in, when we reached my door, and he came. I told him just a little about Marion and myself. Marion could be heard moving around the other room, probably dying to be called in; but I gave Bob a high-ball and we drank it alone.

He offered to pay me ten dollars a week. I was to work with him three nights, and type the rest of the time. He offered to rent me a typewriter, so I could work in comfort at home. Very pleased and amused he was with my elation and enthusiasm over the job. Very doubtful as to whether I would be able to tackle the work.

He went home, leaving the tang of his tobacco behind him, about an hour later.

Marion banged in, as soon as he banged out, and wanted to know how come. I was in no mood to talk. I'm not the kind who can rhapsodize over a heart-flutter.

Nothing could keep me out of the library for the next four nights. I researched with note-book and pencil, and an asperin tablet, until my eyes would close from the weight of sleep.

When next we met, (again at Swan's house), I was loaded with enough names, dates, costumes and customs of the period to startle the university. Bob Briggs looked at me with new eyes—and that's all I wanted.

The first few weeks of working together, were uncomfortable, and disappointing. We tried working at Swan's, but the family had a way of interrupting and telling us when we should call it a night. Then Briggs arranged for the use of one of the rooms at the university, but that was barn-like and appalling with its pit of empty chairs and yawning black-board walls. Then, we tried Brigg's own office, but that was stuffy, and cluttered with reminders of his regular work. Besides, in all these places, poor Bob would eventually discover that he had not brought certain books or papers he needed, or that he was out of his favorite Virginia-cut tobacco.

By this time, we were obviously drawn to each other, but neither of us would openly admit it. Briggs made a decision. He decided to solve two problems, by having me come out to Englewood and work at his home. There he would surely have his books and tobacco, and there I would, no doubt, fall out of love with him.

I met Flora, who had two gold teeth, and made gorgeous hot chocolate; and once I met the two off-springs. Both boys, carbon-copies of Flora except for the gold teeth, which, of course, could be attended to later. Flora was very sociable. It was the key-note of her personality. She just had a heart big enough for everybody. . . . Every other Sunday afternoon, she had open house for all the mealy youths from the university who wanted to come out and get close to a warm fire and eat free sandwiches. Flora would sit at the piano, and get the boys singing. All the boys loved Mrs. Briggs. They all brought her their "problems", and she would talk about how they should control themselves and mold themselves into fine upstanding men; and sometimes she would give them a dollar bill when they were broke. She "could always understand, because after all, she had two boys herself. Three, really, for Bob is nothing but a great big boy. . . ."

Well, Bob and I worked in Englewood, and the oftener Flora butted in on us, the more undeniable grew our attachment for each other. So, one night,

he kissed me and told me he'd better get another "assistant." So I kissed him back, and told him if he did, I'd never be the same again. So then he walked over to his casement window which needed a washing, and looked out and shook his head and said he couldn't help it, he couldn't keep his mind on his work. Besides, I was so young and he just couldn't view me as "an ordinary lass" (honest to God, those were his words!). So I said, was he so old?

Thirty-seven, sighs Briggs.

Well, of course, maybe that settles it, I laughed.

He still looked out of the window, and after about ten minutes of watching the smoke come out of his pipe, I began gathering up my papers.

So he came over and helped me. And helped me put on my coat and hat and rubbers. Suddenly I saw there were tears in his eyes, and I put my hands out and smoothed back his hair . . .

"You're beautiful—" Briggs announced in a loud whisper.

"You're wonderful—" I told him, and how I meant it!

Well, I expected to be kissed. But he got up very quickly and clumsy, and pushed me away. Then, without another word, he turned and walked out of the room.

I was furiously angry for a moment, particularly because he left the door open. I wished I had never seen his Indian profile, or heard his long-drawn-out

laugh. . . . Then I began to sniff . . . I didn't want to be caught crying, so I grabbed my gloves and muff, and walked right out of his house. . . . I trudged to the ferry, and leaned against the boat-railing, crying like a clown, all the way across the Hudson.

But I didn't sleep that night, and I hoped he didn't either. . . . I tried to talk myself to sleep. . . . What did I care? What did he and his Flora matter. . . . I hoped his damned-old biography was a flop. . . . I'm glad the work is over . . . some labor for ten dollars a week! And traipsing out to Englewood, to boot. . . . I hoped his next assistant would be cross-eyed and have a wart. . . . I hated him, the old fool. . . .

For four days I heard nothing from Briggs. Meanwhile, Marion was complaining of my disposition, and I sensed something akin to relief in her voice when she announced on Saturday night that her show was going on the road in two weeks.

Briggs called me up five endless days later. He hadn't written a word on his biography. He had discovered that he couldn't keep his mind on his work with me or without me. I said that was a pretty tough break, and hung up.

So next night, around ten, without so much as by your leave, Briggs knocked at my door. He said he was "passing by" and thought he would pick up some papers I had forgotten to return to him. . . .

A fine time to be "passing by"—with me washing out my underthings in the bathtub!

My hands were all soapsuds, so I jerked my head toward my writing table and said the papers were over there, and to help himself. But, instead of following orders, Briggs flopped down in my big armchair and lit his pipe, without taking off his coat.

"Excuse me," I said, "but I'm doing my week's wash, and with you here, I can't keep my mind on my work."

"I'll wait until you're through," Briggs nodded casually.

So I went back to the bathroom, and finished washing out my underwear. But my heart was jumping all around like the soap. When I was finished, (and I prolonged it as long as I could) Briggs was still sitting in my room.

"That puts color into your cheeks," he remarked with a slow sad smile. Slow, sad smiles generally get me, but this time I just shrugged.

"I've got some packing to do now," I said testily. "Sorry I can't be more friendly, but you see, I didn't expect you."

"I didn't expect to come. What are you packing for? Going away?"

"Uh-huh. My roommate is going on the road with her show, and I can't afford this place alone. I'm going to move."

"Well, don't let me keep you."

Angrily, I went into Marion's room, and began packing. Just useless gestures. Lifting and laying things, and wondering where I put them. I was determined to outlast him.

Within a half hour, he came to the door of Marion's room and leaned against it, watching me. It made me nervous.

"May I help?" he suggested quietly.

I sat back on Marion's bed and gazed at him.

"Yes, you can help. You can go."

"I'm not going to go."

We kept on looking at each other. I wished I could manage to say something.

"You know you don't want me to go, Dora."

"Yes, I do."

"No, you don't."

I began to sniff. I felt awfully tired.

He came over and gave me his handkerchief.

"Tell me, you don't want me to go, Dora. . . ."

Marion couldn't make out just why I suddenly seemed interested in life again. She had been out to a party after her show, the night that Bob was "passing by" . . . I told her less than nothing of what had occurred, merely announcing a few days later that I intended to keep the two rooms.

"Alone?" she frowned at me with lifted eyebrow.

"Practically," I smiled.

She tried very hard to let it go at that. But the

night before she left, she talked at me through her hair, while she brushed it.

"I thought I'd learned never to mind other people's business for them," she rumbled in her most sisterly tones, "But you have me a little worried, Dora. You don't mind if I talk?"

"No. But I don't need to be worried about."

"I wish I could feel sure. You take things so seriously, Dora. You take people seriously, or else you don't take them at all. That's what makes you so sweet and nice—but it really isn't to your own best interests. Now, me—I'm flippant."

"I can be flippant. But I get tired of it, sometimes."

"I just don't want to see you get the short end of it."

"Maybe it's better to get the short end of things, than get nothing at all. Don't start being motherly, Marion. I'll wangle along."

"There isn't a motherly bone in my body."

"I didn't mean to be nasty. I only mean—oh, for God's sake, Marion, I'm so frightfully lonely . . . I'll go out of my mind if life doesn't get to mean something besides work and sleep and subways and tea-rooms and talking to myself. . . . It's too damned bad I can't meet someone young and free, with a marriage certificate in one hand and a heart of gold in the other. I'm sorry. But I'm human. I've met fifty—sixty—a hundred men in the last two

years. . . . What did they all add up to? Now I've met one that ticks. . . . Somebody who has more in his head than dirty jokes, and more on his chest than hair. Somebody who makes me feel . . . Oh, hell, you know how he makes me feel. . . ."

Marion did up her hair silently, and looked at me through the mirror.

"Is it just temporary?"

"How do I know?"

"Well, let's go out and have a plate of spaghetti."

Bob Briggs and I, in a German restaurant (Bob had a passion for German cooking), took two weeks to figure out how we could work and love without interference. Have you ever tried to figure that out? We decided on a pretty weak-kneed story which I was to recite verbatim to my landlady. It was a lot of trouble, but Bob was facing a lot of trouble, too, in managing Flora. First he was to explain that I had resigned because it was too difficult to commute to Englewood in such weather and still keep on with my job. Well, even Flora would believe that. Bob would tell her he had another helper, and had to work in town. Next Bob had to consider money matters. And finally, he had to think what to do about the summer, inasmuch as he and "the flora and the fauna" (as he always referred to his family) generally went Catskilling ensemble for the hot weather. . . .

It was fun, deciding how to outwit and hoodwink the universe—and the university. No bride ever got a bigger kick out of planning her wedding, nor was any bride more weary than I when at last things were settled. . . . As for a "trousseau," I blew myself to some stockings, a new corset (even girls as skinny as I was, wore them in those days), some silk bloomers and camisoles, nightgowns, pajamas and a new kimona. To say nothing of toilet articles, one dress and a spring coat and hat. My charge account totalled nearly two hundred dollars and I tried not to think of it. . . . Then I added twenty-five dollars more to buy Bob a nice cozy smoking jacket as a love-gift. . . . He gave me a pin with a pearl in it the day after. He really hadn't thought of making a gift until I presented mine. But I wasn't hurt about it. . . .

As soon as Marion left town, I explained to my landlady that my uncle, Bob Farrell, who lived in Paterson (she had heard me mention my relatives there many times, because it was where Rita lived), had a magazine job which required his being in New York a great deal. My uncle wanted to take Marion's room where I could help him with his work whenever he was in town.

The story rode fairly well, particularly when the landlady met Bob and he never flickered an eye as he called me "niece." Besides, the rooms had sep-

arate doors to the hallway, and there really was no harm. . . .

I dumped a good deal of furniture from each room, and bought two second-hand desks, a bookcase, a big easy chair, and a smoking stand. Those pieces comprised the first furniture I ever owned in my life. And they were lousy. Bob paid the fifty dollars I was soaked for them. Then we bought a second-hand typewriter.

I was so elated—so excited—so happy. I'll never forget the first time Bob and I closed the door of his room and looked at each other. I'll never forget my quiet happy tears, when he came close to me, and held me tight in his strong warm arms. . . . After all, I had never been alone in a room with love, before. . . . I'll never forget his whispering over and over, "Baby, baby . . . you're just a baby. . . ." Because it made me shudder. . . . And then it made me laugh. It reminded me of Flora saying he was just a great big boy. . . .

We felt better after I laughed. . . .

Bob's idea of love shocked me beyond measure. Perhaps he had been restrained so long, that possession made him heady. I've never met a man who had younger notions of abandon and release in sex. His Pan-like caperings and breathless ceremonies appalled me because of their impetuosity, violence, and dramatic lack of self-consciousness. . . . Often I wanted to laugh at the funny spectacle he some-

times made . . . a love-sick English A in B.V.D.'s . . . suddenly realising the shades were up and somebody might be looking. . . . Yet, sometimes he made sex very beautiful; he gave me what most girls never get—technique. The trouble was I was so hungry for love myself, that he raised my appetite to a peak, only to find that he had satiated himself and was suffering from amorous indigestion. . . .

But, whatever I came to think of Bob eventually, he certainly filled the bill for me right then. He was gentle, kind, humorous, filled with a spirit of adventure.

I needed to love, as well as to be loved. As a result, I became a semi-slave for Bob before very long. That's probably the reason things busted up the way they did. You can do too much for a man, sometimes. Especially for a man who considers you an adventure. . . .

At first, we did nothing on the biography except talk about it. A sweetly immoral lady, alive and eager and young, far outshadows any siren in her coffin, no matter how famous she might have been. Bob and I were lovers, earnestly and assiduously, for our time was so scarce, and there was so much to tell each other. . . . I told him almost all about myself . . . except the baby. . . . .

Our behavior became apparent, evidently, for one day I came home from work to find that my land-

lady had pushed a huge heavy highboy up against the door that led from my room to Bob's. For weeks, thereafter, we pushed the highboy away, and pushed it back into place again the next morning. . . . But the procedure became tiresome, and the landlady's manner unbearable.

Bob was nervous and fatigued right about then because it was examination time at his college. For two weeks I saw almost nothing of him, though he phoned each day.

Then one night, he came in, elated, to tell me that he had taken on a summer class as an excuse to stay in New York. His family was going as usual to the Catskills, where he would join them each week-end. Flora understood that between summer classes and his biography . . . etc., etc., etc.

So Bob and I searched for an apartment. We took an adorable little hole, way up on Riverside Drive, as Mr. and Mrs. Farrell. It was furnished, and we added our desks and bookcase, and were thoroughly thrilled. It was nearer to Bob's ferry to Englewood, and only cost fifty dollars a month. I made curtains, bought pots of geraniums and a canary; and with seventy-five dollars Bob gave me I bought a platinum wedding ring and a small solitaire at a hock-shop famous with theatrical people. I had learned of it through Ethel. I felt embarrassed and humiliated buying those rings alone, but of course Bob couldn't be seen buying them for me—or with me.

. . . The circumstances were so different from the last time I had bought a wedding ring. . . . Now, I felt terribly in love, and it seemed such a cheat that my man couldn't really be free to love me. . . .

The shamed feeling all vanished into smoke, later, when Bob made a ceremony of putting those rings on my fingers. . . . Kissing them and then holding me tight and wishing out loud. . . .

Before three weeks slipped by in the new apartment, Bob grew uneasy about his work. The biography must be written. I agreed. I always agreed with Bob. I gave up my job at the department store, and Bob paid me the same salary to work on his biography (which money I applied on the charge account). After all, he supplied my living expenses, such as they were. I never once got a new dress the whole time I was with Bob. But I did (by stinting) pay my charge account and add to my bank balance. I worked hard for his salary too, with no charge for overtime, on research, typing, writing letters for information, etc., etc. . . .

The moment we started work, Bob lost his growing impatience and irritability. Once again we were thrilled and enthusiastic and interested. I have always believed that his "adventure" with me was what gave his book the flavor and life that made it such a success. Maybe I'm kidding myself. At any rate, he was happy with me, I know. He'd have always been happy with me, if he'd only let himself.

I loved him. I was so damned grateful for his love. For the way he'd rattle the key in the lock, throw open the door, and call "Hello, kid! Gee, it's good to be here."

Very seldom did we go out to dinner. We didn't want to be seen places together. So, I cooked dinner, and breakfast. I took care of the apartment. I worked, during the days he wasn't there, like mad, to surprise him when he came with how much I had done. I kept the apartment in order, I marketed, I took care of him as if he were made of china. Three nights a week we'd work on the biography. He dictating, musing, going over what I had finished. Getting excited over new books I had dug up for him over the week-end, while he was in the Catskills with Flora and the boys.

It was a hot summer, but Bob didn't mind the heat at all. I did. Though I kept telling myself how much better off I was than any previous summer in New York. I didn't have to get up in the morning and fight the subway rush down to work. I could lie in bed and think. I was studying, and learning; and I loved it. I had a lot of leisure, in spite of all the work I did for Bob. And leisure is a luxury, which once experienced, becomes a necessity. Besides, I was alone a lot, and being alone is heaven as long as you are in love.

I had told Rita I was going west with Marion. I arranged for Marion to write to me care of Mrs.

Howe, where I went occasionally to gather up letters; and I wrote to Marion frequently. Ethel I merely dropped. My whole life, at the time, was Bob. He was about the only person I saw or spoke to.

For a long time I was blissful. I loved having an apartment and doing things. I didn't love wearing the rings and being called "Mrs." because it made me feel such a cheat. But I adored Bob too much to let it matter. I revelled in learning and studying and reading. For the first time, I had hours and hours for books. I read everything Bob mentioned. Dickens, Milton, Thackeray, O. Henry, Mark Twain, Macauley, Bacon, Addison, Emerson, Anatole France, Meditations of Marcus Aurelius (who sure knew his stuff), Imitations of Christ (but I never liked imitations of any kind) . . . a hodge-podge, until my brain was somewhat over-fed. . . . I still kept on with my correspondence courses on English, History and "Literature". . . . It has often occurred to me, later, that most of the females who became famous in history were mistresses. (You're welcome to Joan of Arc, I don't want her.) I grew to love Madame DuBarry, and Pompadour, and Lady Hamilton, and even Lola Montez. There was something in common between me and Catherine of Russia. . . . Like a dog goes to a bone, I eventually concentrated on the lives of the gay janes of past days. No girl who wants to go successfully wrong

should pass up their biographies. They are splendid text-books. After all, the first girl in our own country to gain mention by historians was a model to all flappers. Pocahontas was the first necker in these here parts. . . .

As for Bob, and my life with him!

It just fluked. I knew it was fluking, long before the bust-up, but I tried to tell myself I was seeing things. I was so comfortable and happy, I hated to admit the truth. To begin where one ought to begin, my love-life with Bob was proving most disappointing. After the first two months. We were gorgeously happy at first, because I did love him—and he did love me, in his way. It wasn't just that he was thirty-seven, for I've met many men at thirty-seven, who can leave you ready for the masseure. I suppose it was that Bob was twice-married. To Flora-and-the-boys; and to his biography. He became more and more married to that damned biography as the summer wore us out. (I don't count his regular work, because all men have their regular work.) So I was just third in his current harem. Besides, Bob wasn't really a man of the world. I mean, he didn't know how to throw care over his shoulder, anoint himself in wine and count that day lost. . . . I didn't realize, then, that there *were* men who knew how to manage two establishments. I was something of an amateur myself. . . .

Besides, it was mostly my fault. I spoiled all the

pep out of him. I wouldn't wash his bathtub down after him; but I did everything else. As I say, I agreed with him about everything; which is a wife's line, not a mistress's. Besides, he was an ideal. He knew so much, his diction, his culture, his background—everything about him awed and impressed me. And a mistress should have a *little* superiority, after all. I hadn't. Gosh, I'd sit alone in that apartment and long so for him, that when he came I'd act like a puppy-dog, wild with delight.

Strangely enough, I never fell out of love with Bob. He disappointed, disillusioned and saddened me beyond expression, but I always felt fluttery over him. His memory stirs me to this day. But he was like a gorgeous dress you buy and pay a hell-of-a-lot-more-than-you-should for, only to find that it goes to pieces with three times wearing, shrinks miserably in the dry cleaners', and never was a practical investment.

Our bust-up came during the Christmas holidays. A lot I saw of Mr. Farrell during Christmas! He was busy being Mr. Briggs and playing Santa Claus to Flora and the boys. Eating turkey with them, and stealing a moment to eat a ham-sandwich with me. New Year's was worse. . . . So then I realized he had been trying to say "to hell with it" for some time, and I up and said it for him. In a perfectly nice way.

For months previous, Bob had been suffering

acutely from qualms of conscience. He couldn't figure what insanity had made him take an apartment with me as Mr. and Mrs. He was scared into grammatical errors for fear we'd be found out. He trembled for his reputation, his career, his family, and his standing. After all, he could easily be kicked out of the university if they knew. We didn't dare go anywhere. Never went to a theatre and almost never to a restaurant. Always he felt he was being followed to our address. Worried for fear so-and-so was catching on. . . .

The biography had become the only urgent link between us. He was feverish to work on it. The moment he stepped into the apartment, until the moment he bid me goodnight and hastened to Englewood, we worked on that damned book. I think it sort of rationalized his association with me. Poor Bob. He was never cut out for an adventure. . . .

Another thing that irked him, was my continual harping on education. My everlasting questions. Asking him to explain this and tell me that. What did they mean by the Macedonian Supremacy? What was mythology all about? A sort of sub-conscious religion? Wasn't the Bible really a lot of myths strung together? Was the Bible really the oldest book, the oldest record of human activity? Was it because the early Christian fanatics burned so many libraries? What about Krishna, in the Bhagavad-Gita. . . . Didn't he think Abelard and Heloise would make a

swell opera? Why hadn't they done it, did he suppose? Or Madame Bovary—or Trilby. . . . Who was Aeschylus, anyway? What had he done for a living?

Well, I got what I deserved—growing irritability, impatience—and a set of the Harvard Classics for Christmas. A second-hand set. Believe me, I've never tried to talk sense to a man since. I've never let on I knew two and two made four, or that the moon went around the earth. . . . But after all, even though I admit I was a dope, there wasn't much else to do when Bob came to me. He was too worried and conscience-stricken those days for love (except for occasional and luke-warm spells); and how could I whoop things up when we never dared to show our noses out together? Never went any place, or saw other people. . . .

I got one other Christmas present via Mrs. Howe. A lovely amethyst necklace with a beautiful note from Marion, saying she was back in town, in a new show, and wouldn't I even have lunch with her? . . . It made me lonely—for young and gay things. . . .

I cried all of New Years' Eve through, and it did me a lot of good. Back and forth like a shuttle train went my mind, loving Bob and hating him.

But I made up my mind.

He didn't come to me until the third of January. And when he showed up at six o'clock, there was no

supper hot and tasty, for all he had phoned me to expect him. Instead, he found suitcases packed, and the apartment in appalling order. I was moving out. The biography was almost finished, except for rewriting. He was getting thin and nervous, and I was so sick of being a bird in a non-union cage, that I couldn't sing. I was finished, and I knew he'd be relieved.

When he came in, he took his pipe out of his mouth and stared at me. I had the advantage, because he didn't know what was about to happen.

"Happy New Year," I said.

"Oh. Happy New Year," echoed Briggs. "What's up?"

"I'm going back to the wife and kiddies," I said, with a flippancy that I wished Marion were there to applaud.

"Dora!"

"Don't look like that!" I warned him and meant it. "Mrs. Farrell is walking out on you. I don't know *how* you're going to get a divorce. . . ."

"Dora, are you out of your mind?"

"No, I've just come to my senses."

He came over and put his arms around me.

"Darling, you're hurt with me. Believe me, child, I was miserable Christmas and New Year's. I missed you so. I'd much rather have been with you. . . ."

"Thanks for saying so. I was miserable too. I don't want to be miserable any more. I don't want

you to be unhappy any more. And you know you aren't happy, Bob. . . ."

"You don't love me. . . . I haven't made you really love me. . . ."

"Well, we could discuss it all night."

"There's somebody else. You've been seeing somebody else. . . ."

(Why do men find comfort in always accusing you of "somebody else"?)

"Well, what if there were?"

He stepped back and glared at me.

"You don't exactly fill my life, Bob. You're pretty engaged filling other people's life. . . . After all, I'm young. I want—oh, a lot of things. I don't know what I want. I only know what I don't want. I don't want to make you nervous and unhappy any more. I don't want to be a terrible complication to you. And I hate to do things half-way. . . ."

I wished he wouldn't stand like a mummy, feeling his pipe-bowl with his fingers and staring at me. He made me want to say things. I had plenty more to say, but I didn't want a free-for-all Billingsgate. . . . I wished he didn't look so damned handsome and heart-breaking.

He spoke at last. And what he said finished everything up brown.

"Of course—you're just that kind. I knew it all along, but I wouldn't believe it. God, it's a joke. I've been so fearful of hurting you—hurting your feel-

ings. . . . And when it all boils down—you're just that kind. . . ."

I swallowed. He was spoiled, and was just trying to absolve himself and put the blame on me. . . . It would be easier to always remember me as a strumpet—just a terrible mistake— Besides, I shouldn't have told him before dinner. . . . A man is apt to say anything on an empty stomach. . . .

"Yes, Bob, I guess I'm just that kind."

"And you think you're just going to walk out calmly, and . . . ."

"I know I am. Please let's not talk about it. I've got everything ready. You see you've given me four solid days to make my plans . . . Those two briefcases over there. They contain the biography. I hope you'll wallow in royalties. It's a swell book. . . ."

My voice cracked. . . . I turned around and put my face in my hands. . . . I was hoping he'd come and put his arms around me and tell me he knew I *wasn't* that kind. . . . I hoped he wouldn't come near me . . . I hoped he'd go out and bang the door. . . .

I sat down in a chair, and put my head on the back of it. When I had finished crying, I turned and found him standing at the window, his foot on the radiator, gazing out at Riverside Drive. I remembered the night in Englewood, when he stood looking out the window. . . .

"I didn't mean to cry. It wasn't because I was sad—or anything. I'm just hungry, I guess. . . ."

He came over and gave me his handkerchief. He had given me his handkerchief down on Tenth Street, the night he had been "passing by". . . .

He put his arm around my shoulder.

"You're right, all around, Dora," he said huskily. "It's the best thing for both of us."

"Of course it is," I mumbled, opening and shuting my purse just to hear the catch click. "You were all washed up months ago. You know you were."

"We live in different worlds, Dora. I wasn't cut out for your world, but you're aces high in your way. It's a damned fine way, too, child."

"I guess I wasn't cut out for your world, either, Bob. I wish I were."

"Come out and we'll have dinner."

We ate at a cheesy place on 125th Street, and the food did make us feel better. We decided lots of things. I said I never wanted to see him again, and to please understand how I felt. He said he felt the same way. We wanted a clean break, both of us, with no hang-overs and no ill feelings. Bob refused to go back to the apartment; he never wanted to see that again either. It was all mine—the furniture, the rent (until the lease was up next October) and the canary to boot. I didn't want it, but I could see Bob was eager to get it off his shoulders. So I just shrugged, accepted and even thanked him. We had

several glasses of wine. Bob was enjoying his rôle. With each glass of wine he though I was more too good for him than ever. Something of the old twinkle came back into his eyes, and it made me restless. . . . I wanted to get it over with, yet I wanted to linger. I did adore him. He wasn't for me; but gee, he was swell. . . .

We left supper around eleven, and I walked to the ferry with him. Back of the ticket-booth we threw our arms around each other, and I gave him a kiss I don't think he'll ever forget. . . .

I walked back to the apartment just as fast as I could. I felt busier, being all out of breath. I opened the apartment (I had Bob's key as well as my own, now), and got two valises. Took nearly twenty minutes to find a cab, and then I went to Bretton Hall where I stayed all night.

I stayed in Bretton Hall for a week, though I shouldn't have afforded it. I shouldn't have afforded anything I did right about then. I had a little over two hundred dollars in the bank. You know how far that can go.

Next day I telephoned Marion. She came up and we went out to lunch. Her gay, continuous prattle gave me a home-again feeling, and the sight of her, pretty and happy and well-dressed, was like a wave of relief. She was doing a specialty in a show and getting a hundred and fifty a week! Pretty up in the show world! Living with a girl named Betty-Jane

who was leading-lady in the same show. They had a fine shake-up of an apartment on Central Park West, and a maid between them! Ethel Rogers? Why Ethel was in Spain with a gentleman friend. Expected to return in a week or so, though.

Marion was a peach. She never asked me a question. Almost never stared at me. And so darn glad to see me that it almost made my hair curl. She had to rush because it was matinée day; and darn the luck, she had an appointment for dinner. But couldn't I come down to her apartment tomorrow and meet Betty-Jane and have a bite with them? Maybe I could find a one-room affair in the same building. Marion wished I would try. Couldn't I go over and see this afternoon?

When she left me, I felt glad to be back in the old world again. I wanted to do a lot of things, and go a lot of places. I telephoned my sister Rita. She was expecting a baby—next month! Did I have a nice trip out west? Oh, Ben and Aggie were fine. No, she hadn't heard a word from Eddie. Didn't know where our freckled-faced brother might be. . . . Yes, mama wrote constantly and seemed to be well. . . . Wouldn't I please come out and see her and tell her all about the west?

I hung up and thought a bit. Rita—going to have a baby! . . . Marion, glad to see me, but so pitying in her glances. . . . Oh, I had seen the pity, and that I'm-worried-about-that-forlorn-little-kitten ex-

pression. . . . Yet, she wanted me to live near her again. . . . Glad to see me. . . .

Slowly, I walked over to Central Park West, and found the address. It was the San Remo. Yes, there was a one-room, gorgeous lay-out with a tiny kitchen that cost ninety-five dollars a month. I closed my eyes, and took it, trying not to feel scared as I wrote out the first month's check. I knew I'd love it. . . . It was furnished—elegant! And it was near Marion.

Then I went back to Bretton Hall and talked to myself in the mirror. Nobody was going to know the-truth-and-nothing-but-the-truth, so help me God, about Bob and me. I wouldn't let Marion—or Ethel when she returned—look at me with pity in their eyes. Marion was pretty successful now, and though she still loved me, I would become tiresome if I wasn't in the swim. . . . After all, they were the only ones in the world I felt close to. . . . I had to have someone. . . . Tommie had given Marion everything, and maybe somebody else was doing it now, even if she did earn $150 a week. . . . Ethel would come back from Spain laden with loot. . . . They would wonder and pity, and feel vaguely contemptuous, if they knew Bob had lavished me with nothing. . . .

I studied myself probingly in the mirror. I was about twenty. I was much prettier than Marion, except that I was such a holy mess. . . . I was sick of being shabby. . . . Sick to death of being shabby.

. . . No wonder there had been pity in Marion's eyes. . . I looked tired. I was so frightfully thin. . . . My hair had no lustre, and I had forgotten, while I was with Bob, how to put one foot in front of the other, with that swinging sweep that Ethel had mastered. . . . I had become round-shouldered, bending over his books and his typewriter. . . .

After supper in Child's that night, I wasn't going to give Marion and Ethel—and probably Betty-Jane—a chance to laugh at me. Or think me a dud, or a dope, or a misfit. . . . I was sure they didn't know Bob's name or who he was. But they knew I had been living with *somebody* . . . and for what? Only Marion would understand that I had been fish enough to adore him. . . . And even she would feel impatient at the idea. . . . After all, it was pretty dumb to be wearing the same worn old coat and the same cheap dresses, after ten months with a lover. . . .

I called up Marion before I went to bed, to tell her that I had taken the one-room apartment in her building. She was thrilled. I told her my lease didn't begin until February 1st, and I had many things to attend to for the next few days. The manager of the San Remo said I could move in a week or ten days prior to my lease so I'd be over for good on January twentieth.

Next morning I went down to my old department store, saw one of the managers I knew; and gave

him a grand song-and-dance, quite haughtily refusing a job. Before I was finished he okeyed my charge account to the tune of five hundred dollars. The dear old bald-head had gathered that I was being backed by a gentleman friend of some sort. . . .

Then I went around to the underwear counter (where I used to sell things), and bought as little as I could get by with. Then, shoes and stockings. Three dresses, a suit, and two evening gowns! Gloves, new purse, handkerchiefs, a fur scarf, a lot of do-dabs and trimmings, hats, veils, etc., etc. Finally I went smack up to my old jewelry counter and bought myself an amber necklace, a lovely trick bracelet, and an evening necklace of seed-pearls. . . . The total came way above the five hundred allowed, but that was up to the dear old bald-head to worry about. . . .

The shopping took nearly two days. Each time I got back to Bretton Hall, I'd try to be severe with myself. Telling myself what a fool I was—but it was such fun being a fool. Every time they'd deliver a big bundle or package, and I'd open it and try it on, I'd love being a fool that much more. Boy, if Bob Briggs only knew what credit I was giving him! . . . If ever he could guess how resentful I was of buying those things for myself. . . . Providing myself with the graft that his love-affair was supposed to have dazzled me with . . . Oh, well, he hadn't "wanted to believe I was *that kind*. . . ." And I

really *wasn't*. I was just trying to impress the girls now. . . . Trying to appear as if I'd been used to being given everything—but the air!

Women are fools.

That night I lost my platinum wedding ring, and I cried like an idiot over it. I had tied it in a handkerchief and carried it in my worn old purse (for I'd registered at Bretton Hall as Miss Macy). I wondered if husbands got mad when wives lost their wedding rings. . . . I got all full of self pity because Bob wouldn't even know, or care. . . . Probably he'd even be relieved. . . .

I went out for a walk. It was raining, but I had my old clothes on, and I loved the rain. I bought a bottle of wine, and took it up to my room to warm me up and put me to sleep. . . . Finally I was glad I'd lost the old ring . . . I still had the measly one-eyed solitaire, and I'd hock that . . . I needed the money, and the ring was just a mile-stone—nothing more! It was time for it to go back where it had come from . . . I wondered who'd use it next. . . .

On Saturday, I drew fifteen dollars from my bank account, and went out to make myself fit for my new wardrobe. . . .

Turkish bath, manicure, facial, shampoo (and I even let them "touch up" my hair a bit with a henna rinse). Even the clerk at Bretton Hall seemed to respect me more when I came back. I wondered if I had done a little of this before, if Bob would have

been less nervous and impatient . . . Oh well, to hell with it. . . .

Over and over, in my room, I tried on my things. The more I felt those new clothes against my skin, and rubbed my hands over the fur or the satin or the velvet, the less I worried about the charge account or the diminishing bank account. I looked beautiful! I did. I'm not kidding. As for the debts, *to hell with them*—maybe *I'd* get a gentleman-friend after all, too. I was *that kind*. . . . Maybe it was the best way, all in all. Maybe it didn't matter one way or the other, what you did. . . . Twice, love had been the bunk. . . .

Sunday, I put on the new suit, and went over to see Marion and Betty-Jane. But Betty-Jane had gone to a country club for dinner. So Marion and I had a nice gab together, each talking louder and faster. . . . I could see her surprise when she first laid eyes on me. But I was that unconcerned! I was that used to looking like a success! We went down and snooped around my new apartment and kidded the manager into letting me come in right away. Nothing like good clothes to help convince people. . . .

That night, Marion had a gang coming in for a buffet supper—served by Hope, the colored maid. Huge platters of sandwiches, and pickles, and sliced tomatoes, and cup cakes, and pretzels and beer, and what you didn't see you could ask for. I stayed on for the party, and had a swell time. Just blossomed!

About twenty people came, off and on; and some went into corners, and one played the piano, and five played crap, and a good time was had by all. Actors, actresses, a playwright, and the swellest looking girls I'd ever seen. . . .

I noticed Marion seemed to favor one particular guy, who kept the palm of his hand under her elbow. He must have had a nice face before somebody pushed it in for him. He was soberly gay, rather silent, but when he spoke he got off a good one, without a flicker of a smile. Obviously, he was used to being boss, and used to having his own way. I couldn't make him out. He was the height of something, but I couldn't tell what. Instinctively I distrusted him, but you just couldn't help liking him.

Later I learned that he was the producer of Marion's show.

Betty-Jane came in just as the party was breaking up, and I gasped. My new wardrobe dwindled into the ash-can. I'd never seen anyone wear a mink coat before. I mean wear it and toss it around. She was about thirty, divorced, severely blonde and quite an eater. She smoked too. I wasn't exactly used to that, at the time. She could have taught sailors how to swear, and roosters how to crow. Boy, did she know she was good?

The party took on a new lease with Betty-Jane's entrance. Betty-Jane was a "panic." She just about let me out. I went home, half an hour later. A nice,

actor-chap took me home. He had an English accent, came from a good family and stopped at nothing to disgrace them. I think, maybe, I wasn't his sex, for all through the taxi ride he entertained me by showing me how to make rabbit shadows with your hand. . . .

Next day, along about mid-afternoon, I moved over to my new home. It was fun getting settled. Marion wanted to know (all the while she was helping me) how I liked Betty-Jane. She didn't either, really, but she wanted to get in with Betty-Jane's crowd. Betty-Jane knew everybody. Besides, if she liked you, you were safe; and if she didn't like you, you might as well go in for tatting.

How did I like Mark? (Mark being the producer). Well, you'll like him when he gets to know you. . . . And so on, until we went to a restaurant for dinner, and Marion left for her show. . . .

The next week was a whirlwind. I started to look for a job. After much deliberation, I called Bob Briggs and asked him if I could use his name as reference. I said as secretary, not as sweetie. And his voice got all hurt and pained. He asked me if I had been to the apartment yet. He had left a little present for me there!

Well, I had to go to the apartment eventually. So next day I went up to haul out all my personal truck, and send over to Briggs the things he had left

behind. I found the present and nearly died. . . . A set of Shakespeare!

Oh well. I took them along. I read some of them eventually. (One thing I found I put in front of this here little classic. . . . Bob had it underlined, and I hope he reads this. I've read his biography. I found it in a book shop months and months later, and bought it. Almost a year after, I found a copy in a second-hand shop which he had autographed "Very truly yours, Robert Whiteside Briggs". . . . I bought it for seventy-five cents. I still have it. . . .)

I told the superintendent of the apartment house up on Riverside Drive that me and Mr. Farrell were going home to the folks in Texas. He asked if I wanted him to find a sub-let tenant. That hadn't occurred to me, but I grabbed at the idea. A month later, he rented it for sixty-five dollars, and that helped my income considerably until the following October. . . .

Often I wondered who lived in there—and why?

Naturally, I had to give some address to the superintendent, so I gave Marion's name and the San Remo. Marion didn't mind. The rent checks came to her, with ten dollars a month off for the Supt. Also a letter came to her along in May, with an envelope inside marked personal for me. It was a note from Bob, begging me to see him.

I phoned him. He was awfully lonely. Terribly lonely. Just to see me for dinner. . . .

I was awfully tempted. I could just picture his slow sad smile. . . .

But I've never been bit twice in the same place, so I just mustered up a cool tone, and said, "Darling, fun is fun. I'm just beginning to get over you. . . . Besides, I have another sweetie now. I'm *that kind.*"

Which wasn't so hot, but I wanted to put an end to the whole thing. I hated myself for saying it, and spent more than one sleepless night wondering what he thought of me. . . . As if it mattered! When he *had* me, he had thought I was like David Harum's horse—he thought I'd stand without hitchin'. . . .

I swore in the darkness that if I ever heard from him again, I'd ignore his message. I stuck to that swear. I heard from him once, nearly ten months later, but I never got in touch with him. Which was a strain, because for all I knew, it might be his death-bed. . . . (P.S. It wasn't. He's still going strong.)

To get back to my career, however. . . .

Job-hunting was a long, long tussle, interrupted by various distractions. First, the delight of having Marion to talk to. Lord, how she had changed in the ten months since I had seen her. Graceful—such a beautiful body! Full of spirits and interest, yet soft and genuine to the core. Still hard-working, dancing, exercising, stretching; constantly at it, every waking minute spent as doth the busy bee. . . . She saw her success on the stage as a tangible thing, now. She knew just where she was going, and how she was go-

ing to get there. Or rather, who was going to take her there.

Secondly, Ethel came home. With a marmoset, (a filthy little beast), a foreign car, a life insurance policy (made out to her) for twenty-five thousand, and six trunks full of clothes. She gave me two dresses, and a lot of advice. She took an apartment on Madison Avenue, mitt noodles, mitt all de garnishings. . . . And decided to go right into the Follies. Ethel was a famed beauty by this time, with a following. So Ziegfeld had her work five minutes twice a night by letting her stand at a dizzy height, practically ready for bed, or anything. . . . She got paid for it, too. . . .

For the first time, Marion and I met, and liked, her gentleman friend. One Russell Tomlinson. A rich importer, who gave parties that cost what most families pay to live for a year. He let Ethel do anything she damned pleased as long as a certain old colored lady was with her to keep her eagle eye on her. That certain old colored lady was easily bribed, however, so Ethel was foot-loose. One of the first things she did was to start horseback riding in Central Park, and invited Marion and me. It was all charged up to Russell, including the costumes at Abercrombie and Fitch. We went riding almost every morning, and that was my idea of heaven at the time.

Thirdly, Rita had her baby. She asked me to come

out and help her have it, and I simply couldn't resist *not* going. It would remind me of too many nightmares, and I'd break out into cold sweat at the mere thought. So I got Marion to phone and say I was sick. Later, I phoned myself, and welcomed the new McManus into the world. She named it Ben, Jr. and actually asked me to be godmother. I couldn't face that either, and I think she was a bit offended. One day, when I called she said mama was coming up from Philadelphia to spend the week-end and see the new baby!

I thought it all over. I decided it was silly, and then I decided it was worth a chance. So I got some gifts for Rita and the heir to the toilet-paper business; and then I bought a lovely beaded bag and a soft knitted sweater for mama. I went out on Saturday. Just to see mama.

It took some time to get out there, and find the big, old-fashioned white house where Rita reigned supreme. I rang the door bell, and asked the German girl if my mother, Mrs. Macy, were there. She said yes, and I asked her to tell mother that Dora would like to see her.

Mama came to the door about ten minutes later. I wanted to cry, when I saw her. She looked so scrawny and shabby and her thin little shoulders were so straight. I explained that I had just got over the influenza, and didn't want to come in for fear of possible germs. But I brought some presents to Rita

and the new baby. And I had brought *her* a couple of little presents.

She went back in and got her coat. Then she came out on the porch, and put her hands on my shoulders. Peering at me! And I wondered if sin showed on my face. I got sorta red all over. I asked her to come over to see me in New York, but she couldn't because she had to get back to Papa. He had the gout, and couldn't spare her long. Then I asked her if she'd heard from Eddie, and she cried and told me he was in jail again. In Chicago! That boy certainly did get around. . . .

I couldn't stand her crying. She made me feel so damned helpless, anyway. I just asked her if she had the same post-office box and promised to write. I beat it after that, telling her to give my love to Rita, and to take care of herself. . . .

All the way back to New York I swore I'd never forget mama again. She needed so many things. I ought to be able to do something for her. Even a few dollars a week would mean so much. . . .

That night I went to a party, and got tight for the first time in my life. There was a playboy there, handsome as a race-horse, who seemed to make me his special charge. I didn't care. I woke up in the same room with him the next morning, and tried to laugh it off. I did very well, considering. His name was Larry Grey, and he was in the chocolate business, but took a flyer in backing shows occasionally.

. . . He liked me and wanted to talk about possibilities. But I laughed too hard to listen. I got back to my own apartment around noon, and slept the rest of the day. When I woke up and moved around, I found a hundred dollar bill in my purse. And I simply let it stay there. Maybe it had been worth a hundred dollars. . . . Whenever Larry Grey called I pretended to be my own maid. After a few days, and a few boxes of flowers, he didn't phone any more. That was the only occasion in my life when I was just a lousy bum. . . .

The other and most important thing that delayed my job-hunting was a sudden and earnest undertaking under most trying conditions. Marion wanted some of my cold-cream. So did Ethel. So did Betty-Jane. I made up a mess of it, and in came requests all over the place. I got frightfully excited. I made the stuff, and I even took time to experiment a little further. My cold cream was simple, but it was excellent for tender or tired skins. (I sound like my own advertisements now.) The basis was (and is) mutton tallow, to which I added almond oil, a little witch hazel, elder flower and rose geranium. . . . Oh, what do you care?

I decided to go into the business. But deciding to go into business, and actually getting started are two different things. Especially to a girl whose debts were as staggering as mine, and who was trying to live the high-life on nothing.

Not until I was completely discouraged with the thought of the cold-cream business did I actually think seriously of job-hunting. Then, I did it thoroughly. I used every introduction and every drag I could get, and I could get plenty through Ethel and Marion. Finally, I had choice of being secretary to a high-powered attorney, or assistant in the women's department of a bank. I took the attorney business because the bank reminded me of how much money I wished I had.

VI

BERTRAM BYRNE, attorney-at-law, was nobody's relic. You haven't heard of him, probably, because he's one of those who made money so quietly that even the government couldn't hear him. At the age of forty-five, there wasn't a gray hair in his red head, nor a philanthropic bone in his body. He had such a genuine sense of humor that he didn't keep pictures of his wife and children in his office. The only man I know who didn't practice that sweet convention.

Mrs. Byrne had disapproved of Bertram to the tune of a hundred thousand dollars a year alimony. Even in those days that was considerable alimony. But Bertram and his impeachable society wife had been saved excitement and scandal by these installment plans. Nothing daunted, Bertram had taken to his fulsome bosom another Mrs. Byrne, whose favorite pastime was outshining the first Mrs. Byrne in social functions. She was a bear, that second Mrs. Byrne. Even Ethel could have learned something from her. Consuelo was her name, take it or leave

it. She loved Bertram to distraction. He found the distraction in less ardent and less socially ambitious frails, who thought they were lucky to get a gold mesh bag or an ermine coat

How Bertram kept them all going and still ran his business is more than his partners could figure out. His partners were much older and had really established the business. Fortunately, they both had provided themselves with sons ready to take their places; so they didn't die of heart-failure every time Bertram forgot an appointment.

The first day I went to work for Bertram Byrne, (at thirty a week) he told me he didn't think I'd ever do. I couldn't be good and look like that. (Nothing could have made me work harder.) He dictated like a steam engine all morning, and I grew weak at the words he used. When he finished, he said "If you can put that on paper, you're good. If you can't, I'll get you an assistant."

I was determined to put it on paper. I was nervous as a cat, and the more nervous I got the more determined I became. Fortunately, Bertram stayed out to lunch for nearly three hours. One of his nicest habits. When he came back he read over my work, waved me aside, and saw two or three men who had been waiting for him. Along about five-thirty, he called me in.

"Tell the cashier you're to get thirty-five a week,"

he said. "Good night. Better get to bed early; we have a hard day tomorrow."

Maybe I didn't walk on air with delight that night. And maybe my feet didn't drag behind me for the next six weeks. Bertram Byrne worked me like a machine. Had luncheon sent into his office, and never so much as offered me a cup of coffee. Drank whiskey at five o'clock, and never so much as offered me a smell. Then worked on until after six! In four days he had given me three notebooks full of dictation, and a list from here to Hong-Kong of calls to make and messages to deliver.

I knew he intended to go to Germany for a two months' stay, and so I did my damndest to last out the six weeks before he was to leave. But on the last go-round, I gave up the ghost. Right in his handsome walnut-panelled office.

When I came to, I coughed with the whiskey he had given me. He let me cough in comfort, and when I was all finished and about to apologize, he snapped, "I knew you wouldn't do. You're fired."

I got to my feet. Suddenly, I didn't feel a bit tired.

"You can't fire me!"

"No? You'll get two weeks' pay."

"What in the name of God do you think I took all that dictation for? I'm going to write it out, and you're going to pay me for it."

He pressed a button under his desk, and when a

pale, dog-eared young man came in, Byrne's voice was tired and small:

"Miss Macy is feeling ill. Take her to her home in a cab."

I didn't even look at him. I walked out; sassed the pale, dog-eared young man, and went home by myself. I barely got my things off before I was asleep. From seven o'clock that evening until eleven o'clock the next morning I slept. Then I laid in bed remembering Bertram Byrne and his insanity. Despising him, and deciding I'd never try to earn my living again. Remembering that Marion was lunching with Mark today, and so there was nobody to talk to. . . . I wished there were somebody to bring me breakfast. I felt too tired to get up and make coffee.

Along about three, I dragged myself out of bed, and took a long hot soak in the tub. Out of a job again! But at least I had two weeks' pay coming to me. . . .

At five o'clock my doorbell rang, and I hoped it was Marion. A huge box of flowers was handed to me, and I thought tonelessly of Larry Grey. . . . Maybe he wouldn't be such a bad solution after all. . . .

I opened it to find a cluster of orchids that even Ethel would exclaim over. I recognized Bertram Byrne's writing on the envelope. A huge business en-

velope. It contained seven ten-dollar bills, and a note.

"Frightfully sorry I overworked you. Just wanted to see if you had the stuff. At first I was satisfied you hadn't. Then I decided I wasn't exactly fair. I'll give you another chance. I've postponed my trip to Germany until June, but I am leaving tonight for a three weeks' trip to Quebec. Don't tell a soul where I've gone. If you want to try to finish up that dictation in those three weeks, you may return to my office and start work tomorrow.

Not that I think you can or will do it. I am enclosing your two-weeks' salary on that assumption.

Yours for bigger and better business women.

B. B. Byrne."

I decided it was a game. There must be some point to it. I went out to supper alone, took a walk around the Reservoir, left a note for Marion, and set my alarm clock. I was in bed by eight.

The next morning I was down in Byrne's office, headed for working my way through five books of dictation and the list of phone calls and messages. For four days nobody much disturbed me. Then came an onslaught of telegrams, phone calls, messages, and people who wanted to know where Ber-

tram was. Even Consuelo called up and wanted to know. Never acted dumber in my life, consciously.

I finished the job (by working at home on Bob's typewriter at nights) two days before Bertram was expected back. I left all the work, and all the messages and reports neatly on his desk. And bid a silent fairwell to his walnut panelled office.

That night I went out on a party with Marion and Betty-Jane. Dancing, no less! I slept most of the next day, and stared at my ceiling wondering how Consuelo ever stood Bertram. . . .

He was expected back Monday morning, and for no reason at all I hung around my apartment all day. Around four o'clock Bertram phoned, asking me why I hadn't come into the office. I told him I'd give him three guesses; and hung up.

At six o'clock, Marion came down and we had a little drink to all mankind. We were going to dinner alone. Mark had gone to Philadelphia to open a new show. Marion talked to him each night on the long distance, and promised to take a train to Philadelphia after her Saturday night performance, and join him there. . . .

We were just about to leave, when my doorbell rang.

Bertram Byrne, looking fair and warmer, stood at the threshold.

"Oh yes," I said coolly, "you owe me thirty-five dollars, don't you?"

"Maybe I do," he beamed. "I've really come to take you to dinner."

"Oh, I never eat," I says right back.

"Then you can watch me," he suggested.

"Well, I have to chase along," said Marion suddenly. "I'm late already, Dora, for my engagement. See you later."

It was the only time in my life I hated Marion. I was furious that she should ditch me. So I got right back at her, on an impulse.

"My friend, Miss Fishhead, Mr. Byrne," I stammered as they came face to face at the doorway.

He bowed ever so slightly. Marion glared at me. She loathed being called Fishhead. But she turned and smiled up at Byrne, putting out her hand and rubbing his fur collar.

"Gee, that's a nice pussy," she remarked. "Did you shoot it yourself?"

Before he tried to answer she was gone.

I laughed. I couldn't help it. I gave him a drink because he asked for it. And then I got on my hat and coat, tied a nice new veil over my face, and went out with him.

It was the first time I was ever helped into an automobile by a comedian in livery. The first time I ever had lap robes tucked around me and my escort.

"Of course, you were teasing me," he began. "It isn't true that you never eat?"

"Oh, I eat on Mondays."

"How about Delmonico's?"

"I don't know. How about it?"

He couldn't impress me with Delmonico's. I was determined he couldn't impress me with anything. I had known all along it was a game. And now I was to learn the score. . . .

"Tell me your life's story," he suggested during the soup.

"I'm too tired. Tell me yours."

"I'm too young. Life's just beginning. Besides you can find out most about me in Who's Who."

"Well, you can look me up in Here's How."

"What ever made you try to be a secretary?"

"Never stopped to think. What ever made you be a lawyer?"

"I had to do something with my life."

"Funny. I felt the same impulse."

Bertram ordered some special kind of sauce.

"How would you like a new position?"

"I'm going to start looking for one tomorrow."

"You're not that unreasonable, are you? Come now!"

"Oh, how do you like your eggs?" I shrugged.

Bertram helped himself to some ripe olives.

"I need a personal secretary. The position is worth about sixty a week."

"I *bet* it's worth sixty. Listen, Mr. Byrne, you're wasting good food and wine. I wouldn't work for you unless they gave you ether."

"You're very charming."

"I imagine you can be, too, when you want."

"I want to now, very much."

"Well then, let's talk foolishness."

"Alright. After we settle our little affair."

"I didn't know we had a little affair."

"I'm sailing two weeks from today. My personal secretary is to go with me to Germany."

"I bet she'll have a good time. Are you going with or without the Mrs?"

"Mrs. Byrne can't accompany me."

"I *know* she'll have a good time."

"Mrs. Byrne?"

"No, your personal secretary. How personal do your secretaries get, Mr. Byrne?"

"Well, they call me Bertram or Bert."

"And what do you call them?"

Bertram laughed. The waiter was nearby, swapping heavy dishes for light ones. . . .

"Well, what do you think of the idea?"

"Oh, it's a good idea."

"I thought you might think so."

"Why don't you be a big boy, and come right out with it?"

"I didn't think I had to."

"You really don't. As a matter of fact, Mr. Byrne, if you love like you work—well, I'm not very strong. . . ."

"I never go in for Amazons. Besides, you don't know how to take care of yourself."

"I do the best I can—without a lawyer. No, I've reason to believe that you're frightfully bossy. I couldn't stand that. I do whatever I damn please, whenever I damn please to do it. I can't be dictated to, except in an office."

"Have you ever been to Germany?"

"No, and I'd like to. Some day—when my chickens are all hatched."

"What chickens?"

"I don't know. I haven't got any."

"But you have ambitions. I can see them in your eyes. Ambitions are absurd for women."

"So is everything else."

"What are your ambitions?"

"Oh, to be independent. To pay my bills. To have something set aside. To open a cold-cream business and have my own income, so that I could thumb my nose at people without having my little finger tremble."

"Ummm. All economic ambitions. I didn't think you were quite that kind."

"Just a human being."

"No thought of love at all? I rather figured that you'd be. . . ."

"All hearts and flowers? Well, I am. I used to be anyway. Love is just—"

"Don't say a lottery."

"No. I was nice enough to let you say that. Love is just asking for punishment. Love is just a word. Did you ever look it up in the dictionary? Funk and Wagnall are the only two gentlemen I've heard of who have it all figured out nicely. Even they say it's 'a strong complex emotion' . . . That's what makes it so impossible. That little 'complex' part."

"What a lot the child knows."

"Well, what do you know about it?"

"I know only one thing. It has to be felt by both people. Or else it isn't love."

"I guess you're right. Why didn't I ever think of that? Both times I fell in love, I guess it was only *me* that had a strong complex emotion. I guess both of them just wanted the same thing you want, when you come right down to it."

"Well, at least I'm honest."

"Yes, at the very least."

There was soft music playing, and I sat back and listened. Die Lorelei. . . .

Bertram was filling my glass. . . . Our eyes met, and I smiled.

"How many times have you been in love?" I demanded.

"Only once. I don't think you can love more than once. I've been trying to find out. . . ."

"Let me know, if you do, will you?"

"I'm not apt to. It's a bit late, now, to hope. You

let me know if you do. Dora, don't you find me interesting at all?"

"I told you I thought you might be charming, if you wanted to."

"I told you I wanted to."

"You mean—this is your idea of trying to make me fond of you?"

"Only an overture."

"Oh, you're a musician!"

"How did the other two make you—fond of them?"

"Oh, *they* weren't rude. Nor bossy. Nor terribly sure of themselves."

"Funny, women enjoy that, as a rule."

"Well, I'm so different from other girls! No. I don't think you'd do at all. Not at all. I like you. In spite of yourself. But I couldn't ever love you. And I couldn't ever be—a personal secretary—unless I loved you. Perfectly absurd, but that's the way it is."

"I don't want you to love me. Women who love or think they love, are a frightful nuisance."

"I've never been a frightful nuisance to anyone, except myself. Anyway, let's let it go at that. Thanks for the invitation. I've never been asked to Europe before."

Bertram paid the bill and helped me into my coat. We drove home with his comic in livery. On the way we talked of the attempt that had just recently been made to shoot Mayor Mitchell. Another man had

received the shot instead, and I remarked that was the way the world is. Then we recalled the time Gaynor was shot, and mused on why people should figure Mayors as being good for target practice. . . .

When he left me at the San Remo, Bertram said, "I'll be busy attending to everything. But I'll see you as often as I can before we sail."

I laughed.

"You're all wrong, brother," I answered. "I have a nice girl friend, though, who might be crazy to see Germany."

"You can tell her about it, when you come back."

He laughed too. We were at my door, and I put in the key and opened it; but stood at the threshold, facing him.

Bertram lifted my hand and kissed it.

"I'll phone you," he whispered, and left.

I could hardly wait until Marion came home After she exploded about being called Fishhead; I told her *all* about it, over our glasses of milk and bologna sandwiches. Her eyes grew shiny with excitement. She asked millions of questions.

Then I sat back and sighed, "Well, it's something to know you've been offered such a chance. And by a man like Bertram Byrne, too. I'll have some fun the two weeks before he sails, anyway. . . ."

Marion lit a cigarette. (A thing she rarely did be-

cause it affected her wind.) "Of course, you're crazy about him," she said quietly.

"Why, Marion!"

"Don't be a fool! I've never seen you kid yourself before, Dora. And you can't kid me! I've never seen your cheeks so flushed, or your eyes so hopping."

"Of course, I'm getting a kick out of it."

"You're nuts about him—and you know it!"

"Well, he's a card. He's terribly interesting. He's dangerous. That's the word for him. Gosh, Marion, let me be impressed with myself a little bit. He's the nearest, I suppose, I'll ever get to a Vanderbilt. . . ."

"Oh, they can be had. . . ."

"But you're crazy. I no more love him than Ethel's marmoset."

"And you mean to say you're going to pass him up?"

"I've already done it."

"Dora—it's a wonder they let you live. God, if I were in your place. . . ."

"Would you go—in *your* place?"

"I have my map laid out for me. I'm a long while at it, but I'll get there. I'm going to be the most famous dancer on Broadway or break a leg. I'm going to have my name in lights, if I have to go to bed with every man on Times Square to do it. That's all men mean to me. What are you going to do?

Look for a job as a stenographer? Or sell something over a counter? Or fall in love with another yap?"

"I have my career planned, too," I sulked. "I want to go into the cold-cream business."

"Well, there happens to be a fly in that ointment. Oh, anyway, what's the dif? Who am I to give advice?"

"Who am I to take it?"

My doorbell rang, and Marion answered, thinking Betty-Jane was joining us. She brought over to me, a huge white-cardboard box, and a book.

"Will the Princess Chip-on-the-shoulder sign for this?" she demanded.

I scribbled my name, and opened the box. My hands shook as I tore at the string. American Beauty roses, with stems as long as my legs. And a card, saying:

"Would these help to make you fond of me?
B.B.B."

"Go on—cry over them!"

I was startled at Marion's voice. I handed her the card, and sat back with the roses on my lap.

Marion laughed She walked over to my writing desk and picked up a copy of the morning *Times*. Soberly she turned the pages to the *Help Wanted* columns.

"Let's have a pencil," she suggested. "There's

some real swell jobs open, darling. Let me see, can you run a mimeograph. . . ?"

The next morning, I was awakened with a box of sweet-peas and lilies-of-the-valley.

"Do you think you're a little fonder of me at all?
B.B.B."

I called him at his office. Thanks for the flowers; but cut them out from now on, please. He simply said; sorry, it was his mistake, and hung up.

That evening I received a different kind of box. It was little, and in it was a wrist-watch. (They were just "the thing" right about then.) The note said: "This is just to remind you that there's only twelve days left to become fond of me. B.B.B. P.S. Is jewelry better than flowers?"

I didn't dare show the watch to Marion. I called a messenger boy, and sent it back to Bertram's office.

The following afternoon, I received a huge box. I actually trembled over the soft fur. . . . A mink coat. . . . What would Betty-Jane think? I put it back in its box. I read the note.

"This will keep you nice and warm on the boat. Are you any fonder of me today? B.B.B."

I went out for a walk. When I came back, I tried on the mink coat. I got weak all over.

Carefully, I folded it up and put it back in the box. I went up to see Marion. She gave me a high-

ball, and I told her about the mink coat. She came downstairs, and I tried it on for her. Then *she* tried it on. We were going over to Ethel's for dinner. I wanted terribly to wear the mink coat. But I didn't.

When Ethel and Marion left for their shows, I walked home. The next morning, I called up Gunther's and told them to call for the coat, and credit Byrne's account.

Then, I sent him back his note, on the back of which I wrote, "No."

That very morning I started job-hunting again. I kept as far away from my apartment as I could. When I put the key in the lock, at last, my heart was thumping, and my eyes searched the room for a package.

It was there!

A Pekinese, with big slobbery brown eyes, and a tail that went mad with excitement at seeing someone. There was a card tied to his neck: "My God, but you're hard to please. B.B.B."

I wrote Bertram a few hours later, and bought a special delivery stamp. I said; "The dog is adorable, and I *am* fond of *him*. D.M."

He called me at eleven that night.

"Well, thank God I've thought of something that satisfied you." His voice was keen and possessive. "Are animals the only answer? They had kittens, and poll-parrots. . . ."

"Bertram, I hate poll-parrots."

"How would you like to have a snack with me right now? I'll be down there in fifteen minutes."

"I'm ready for bed."

"Is that a counter-suggestion?"

I hung up.

The phone rang a few moments later.

"How near ready are you, Dora?"

"For what?"

"For the snack. I'm on my way."

Then *he* hung up.

He arrived a half hour later. We went to the Brevoort.

A week from the following Monday, we sailed. Both Marion and Ethel came down to the boat to see me and the Pekinese off. Bertram brought them to his room, introduced them around and cracked a bottle of champagne. I was so excited I could hardly swallow it. When the whistles blew, and the last calls came, I threw my arms around Marion. She was crying. . . .

I clung to the railing alone, and waved to the receding dock, but I couldn't see anything but a blurr. . . .

Then I went to my own room. It adjoined Bertram's. His (a huge two-room and bath suite) had been jammed with people who were seeing him off. Even Consuelo had been there. Looking so dis-

tinguished and worldly-wise. . . . He was to join her in Newport when he returned. . . . I had been introduced to her, casually, and she had acknowledged the introduction with condescending graciousness, remarking that Bert had spoken of how brilliant a young woman I was. . . .

In my room, I sat down and looked at my Pekinese, and tried to think. Bertram was travelling with *me,* a valet, and a real secretary (a sour-faced young man, named Kraus, with glasses, who spoke to Bertram constantly in German) . . . Bertram had three trunks, and I had four valises. (Which hadn't been Bertram's fault.)

I sat still, my mind too crowded to consider unpacking, or to want to look at New York slipping out of my reach. . . . I was clammy with nerves. Marion had been right, from the start. I was nuts about Bertram. I didn't really love him. Not as I had loved Bob. Not even as I had loved Needy. But I *was* fond of him, in a great big way. . . . But, I was afraid of him. He could be so charming when he wished; yet I knew, without explaining it, that he could be all-fired disagreeable if the mood took him. He was no half-way man. He knew what he wanted, and saw to it he got it. He knew what he didn't want, and saw to it you fully understood his tastes. . . .

Everything had happened so furious and fast. I had the mink coat, and I had the wrist watch. I had

my charge account paid. I owned not a debt nor a sou in the world. . . . I had ten thousand dollars in my bank account. . . . Ten thousand dollars in my bank account. . . .

The Pekinese whimpered, and I went over and snuggled my face in his warm fur. . . .

I wanted to cry, but the tears wouldn't come. Why should I want to cry? It was all right for Marion to cry. . . . (I had instructed Marion to send the fifty-five dollars she got each month from my Riverside Drive apartment to mama care of the post-office box. . . .)

Someone knocked at my door. It was Kraus, who told me Mr. Byrne wished to see me. . . .

I smoothed back my hair, winked at the Pekinese and went into Bertram's room.

"I'm tired," he said. "But I have a little work for you to take. There are a number of things Mrs. Byrne wishes me to get in Europe. I shall turn the whole thing over to you. I thought perhaps I'd have dinner served up here, and you might take some notes."

"Of course, Mr. Byrne."

"Kraus, will you pay my respects to the Captain? And you may run along now. Send those radios, and have your own dinner downstairs."

"Yes, sir."

"I won't need you again tonight."

The sour-faced young man went out and closed

the door softly behind him. Bertram got up and turned the key. He came over and kissed me.

"Glad I made you fond of me, Dora?"

"Very glad!"

"Am I pretty nice?"

"Nice as they come."

"Call me Angel. I loved to be called Angel."

"Lucifer!"

"Why the devil do you wear high-necked things?"

"Because they're classy. And I'm boney."

"You're not. You're sweet. I didn't mean to tear that. . . . Dora kiss me. . . ."

"I kiss best in the dark. . . ."

For all that I knew not a word of German, I made up my mind to give Bertram ten thousand dollars worth on that trip. I've never been a cheat. Not consciously. So while it was considerable strain, particularly when Bertie became pesky (as he frequently did); I merely remembered how hard I had worked in bygone days for fifteen or eighteen dollars a week, and calmed myself.

First, I stuck to the warning I had given him; that he couldn't dictate to me outside of a notebook, and that I did what I damned pleased when I damn pleased to do it. It was a great system with Bertie. He loved it. He was so used to being obeyed when he tossed off an order. Of course, I *did* do some secretarial work. That earned my salary of "sixty a

week"—for Bertie always observed the amenities. As far as that work was concerned (generally an hour or two a day) I was extremely careful. I shopped for Mrs. Byrne, gathering up porcelain, wine glasses, tapestries, works of arts, and antique booze. I'm sure the Byrne cellar was sufficiently stocked with pre-war stuff to last them to this day. Maybe they knew prohibition was on its way. . . .

Anyway, everything I bought for Mrs. Byrne, I bought for myself and shipped to Rita (the only person I knew with an attic or a cellar). Bertram thought that was awfully funny. Men have a peculiar sense of humor. . . .

But outside of the "work", I made my own rules and kept them. I discovered it's much easier to please a man when you don't love him. Love makes you so slobbery. While being only extremely fond of someone, leaves you with your brain still clicking. Besides, Bertie had a tease of danger about him that was an inspiration. If he had been born poor in India, I'm sure he'd have been a fire-eater, just for fun.

So I wasn't placid, nor paddy-cake, nor did I ever take a taste of humble-pie. I kept Bertie guessing, and I kept him on the run. The dear darling redhead had the time of his life. Nor was I exactly bored. I pulled all of Ethel's tricks, upon occasion. I was so flippant that Marion herself could have

taken notes. I got lost for two whole days in Berlin, and he had a grand time searching for me.

When I found there was "nobody" in Berlin, because all the really worth-while people were off for the holidays, in the Bavarian Mountains, or up seeing the midnight sun, I threw temperament. I wanted to go and see how it felt to take a Baltic Sea bath. When he refused, I went by myself! Which made him furious. But he joined me there for the week-end.

After the first time he commented on my shop-girl complexion, I *never* let him see me without my make-up. I slept with make-up. To the devil with my skin—I could take care of that later. In the meantime, at 6 A. M. or midnight, he never walked in on me and found me pasty-faced.

The only cloud on my sunny day, was Kraus. The sour-faced young man who knew enough English to be insulting. How he hated me. Which I didn't mind at all. Then, one night, he spluttered at me, (as near to sotto voce as he could come) "You're not fooling me. I know you're his *mistress!*" So I slapped him in the face. Too bad I didn't tell Bertie, so Kraus could have been fired. Because I lived to regret the slap.

I insisted Berlin was dull. We stayed at the Adlon Hotel, which was supposed to be the hot potato jacket. But give me the San Remo any week-day. I soon exhausted the shops, and as for the theatres, I

only wished Marion could see them and quit being ambitious. . . .

Never did it enter into my befuddled brain that something might be going on. I knew Bertram was insanely busy. Those he didn't chase out to keep appointments with, came to see him at his hotel. But they all talked German, and what good did that do me? They all looked so dire and important; they all drank earnestly while they talked, and they all laughed loudly when they had sufficient privacy. A laugh is the same in any language. . . .

I saw all there was to be seen, and pretended to be unimpressed. Except in Potsdam. I loved Potsdam. But I was annoyed that the Emperor should have taken his boat up to Norway the one time I landed in Berlin . . . I felt cheated of some of the show. Eventually, I got so fed up with Bertie's endless conferences and dinners, that I insisted on going places myself. He engaged a nice German woman to go with me, who spoke a little English. Very little. We visited Potsdam over and over again; and took a trip to Spreewald, which I adored because of its charming ceremonies all in costumes, but the gnats there were a plague. More than one pair of shoes I wore out in the museums. But works of art are so damned inanimate.

Aside from that, I ducked Kraus whenever he came near, and bought innumerable gifts for those I loved back in America. . . .

Then came the day when I faw down and go boom. . . .

Bertie was out, and Kraus knocked at my door. He was most polite.

"If you woot be so kint," he jerked each word out with an effort, as he dragged forth a brief-case, and tapped it with his thumb. "I go out on business now, and there is a chentleman coming to call for this. It is all important."

"Sure, I'll give it to him," I agreed, thinking it worth my while to make peace with this onion.

"It is all important," he repeated gravely. "The chentleman is named Ekstein. Be sure it *is* Ekstein. If you woot be so kint."

"How can I be sure it's Ekstein?"

"He will be short and wear thick glasses, and he has one arm stiff."

"Well, nobody could miss Ekstein. Leave it with me, Sonny, and I'll take care of it."

"If you woot be so kint," he smiled greasily, "I woot be obliched. If I can really trust you wit it. . . ."

"I've been trusted by experts, my boy!"

When he left, I went on plucking my eyebrows and talking to my Peke. An hour later, Ekstein came, and damned if he didn't have a stiff arm and wear thick glasses. So I handed him the brief-case. But, wise to the ways of the world (or my half of it) I got Ekstein to sign for it, or he didn't get the brief

case. Which was hard to do, not knowing German. . . . (You should try to speak the sign language to a German with a stiff arm!)

Bertie came back at seven, and I was wearing black velvet cut way down to there. After the preliminary bout, I handed him Ekstein's receipt, and Bertie lost all his sense of humor. He raved, he cursed, he nearly ate his shoe. Kraus was on his way to Copenhagen on business, and couldn't be reached. Kraus was a fool. I was a fool. Everybody was a god-damned fool.

So I said I was glad he included himself, and went into my room and banged the door. I heard him telephoning wildly—all in German. I heard his bossing people around.

If I could have seen Kraus right about then he wouldn't have been able to get around for weeks. . . .

All night Bertie let me stay in my room. I got frightfully hungry, and the hungrier I got, the madder. All the next day Bertie never came near me. All that night, I might as well not have been in Berlin, for all he seemed to care.

Meanwhile, I ordered my own food and signed for it. On the second day, I got sore enough for action. I packed my things, and went out and dug up a ticket to Paris. Before I left at eight o'clock that night, I bought a huge bunch of lilies, and fixed up a

tiny coffin in Bertie's room. . . . On top, I put a note;

"I'm not fond of you when you're like this. So I've buried my heart here, and am going to bury my poor starved spirits in Paris. I'll be at the Crillon there. Yours for bigger and better brief-cases,

Dora."

I wished like hell he'd show up before I left. I really didn't want to leave. But no Bertie came home to dinner, and I was too nervous to struggle enough with German to question people who might know. It's a frightful language to tackle; imagine a language where sex means half a dozen! People who make rules about der, die and das—when all I knew was des and dos. . . !

So me, and my Peke, and my five valises (a new one had been added) got on the train to Paris, and eventually arrived, fatigued and cross, at the Crillon. We went to bed in tears because there was no wire from Bertie. But for the first time in nearly two months I slept with my face naked. Not a crumb of make-up, and what a relief. . . .

Next day, the hotel supplied me with a courier nearly sixty years old; and I was led to a few beauty parlors. And had things done. I felt tired, and I wished I hadn't left Bertie. Dinner alone in the hotel wasn't so gay at all. I breakfasted with the

Peke in my room, but I hadn't slept with worry, and I felt like going out on the street and scaring little children.

I began to hunt up boats back to America. I didn't want to go home alone. I wanted Bertie. I wanted to know he was fond of me . . . I wanted to know I wasn't just a brief case. . . . (pardon me!)

Downstairs, where they kept a smooth-shaven man who talked English, I asked about reservations on a boat. I heard a well-known voice that gave me a homesickness; and I turned swiftly and eagerly, to face—Ethel Rogers! Ethel, in a long black satin suit, with a split skirt, and a lace jabot over her bosom, and a gardenia in her lapel; Ethel, swave and svelte, topped by a black velvet hat with an aigrette, and tossing off some French left-handedly.

We fell on each other's well-known necks. Up in my room, we ordered sherry, and swapped stories. Her story utterly floored me. She was married—to a Count! Quite unintentional, and quite unexpected. Married only two weeks ago right in Paris.

She and the Count were sailing for their honeymoon to America in three days. She wanted to get back in time for the new Follies. . . . Then she asked me what I was doing in Paris alone. So I told her how completely I was doing nothing, and confided about my blow-up with Bertie. We decided that if I didn't hear from him, I would sail with her.

That being settled, I went to dinner with her and

her Count. He was a cluck of a miniature Count, if you ask me, but maybe Ethel knew what she was doing. At any rate, it didn't hurt her feelings one little bit to be called Countess.

The Count knew his way around, I'll hand him that much; and Ethel's knowledge of Paris was not in Baedeker's. To begin with, she never went to the shops. She played the mountain, and let Mohammed come to her. Right in her suite at the Crillon, Ethel could spend more money and give more orders than Napoleon at a battle-front.

I got reservations on her steamer, and two nights before I was to sail, I weakened and wired to Bertie. Collect.

"I'm only doing this because I damn-well please. But being fond of you has lasting effects, so I must say goodbye. My love to Kraus when you see him. I'm sailing tomorrow on the 'France' with a friend.

Dora."

Next morning we took the train to Havre; Ethel and the Count, me and the Peke. My six valises (I had added another) and Ethel's twelve trunks. The boat was to sail at five; but it was horribly delayed, and we hung around Havre trying not to smell the fish, until nearly seven. Eventually they took us on board and fed us lavishly. The French are always lavish with food and women.

Ethel knew every fifth person on the boat (though I was the only female she smiled at), and so the evening was quite entertaining. After eleven, we spent most of the time in Ethel's quarters, and I began to see why Ethel liked her Count. He was quite playful, for such a tiny dainty chap (you could have put him in your wardrobe trunk without crushing your dresses). The Count put nine bottles of champagne up on top of Ethel's trunk (she only kept one in her room); and then he'd stand by the door and shoot off the tops with a cute little slingshot that had stones about the size of your thumbnail. It was a nice game, and eventually he let everyone play. Then they started betting, and the money that was spread out on that carpet would have bought the ship and it's captain.

I won eight hundred dollars, and then I quit. (One of the first things any self-respecting mistress learns is to quit while she's winning. The reason why so many high-life dames end up selling corsets or magazine subscriptions from house to house, is because they invariably get too cocky to remember that rule.)

So I gathered up my eight hundred, kissed everybody goodnight, and stalked, none too steadily, back to my stateroom. The key-hole had a way of dodging me, which I found most amusing. I could hear my Peke barking inside at the sound of my laughter.

Suddenly my stateroom door opened *for* me, and I nearly fell inside from the shock.

Bertie, more red-headed than I'd ever seen him, stood with the door-knob in his hand as if he'd like to throw it at me.

"Where have I seen you before?" I gasped.

"You're a fine one!"

"You're looking pretty good yourself."

I didn't like the way he took hold of my wrist as he pulled me inside and closed the door.

"Who in hell do you think you're playing with?" says Bertram, the fire-eater. "Who do you think you're giving the run-around?"

He didn't look a bit funny, but I laughed. I just couldn't help laughing.

"How's Kraus?"

"Women have been shot for less than you've done!"

"Darling, I *couldn't* do less!"

"I'm not in a joking mood, I'll have you know."

"Are you trying to pick a fight?"

Bertie's eyes narrowed. His nostrils reminded me of an accordion. I didn't exactly relish the way he looked. And the beat of the engines under my feet made me feel dizzier than ever. But if you bite your teeth together very hard, you can keep steady.

He came toward me, and I hadn't any intention of backing away. He put his cold white hands on my bare shoulders, and I bit my teeth together harder.

"I'm going to fix you."

"Bertie. Don't be vulgar—right in front of the Peke!"

"I'm going to teach you a lesson you'll never forget."

"I'm a quick study."

"Damn you!"

And so I was damned.

By the time I got to New York, I was damn bored. Bertie was no longer dangerous. Still, I didn't want to take any chances, so I was extremely nice-and-disagreeable to him for two weeks after we arrived.

What is known as the Great War was declared on the day Bertie and I, along with the Count and Countess Montparnasse (that will do to indicate Ethel's martial path to glory, won't it?) landed in New York.

Bertram and I went to the St. Regis Hotel. So Ethel and her Count did the same. Much to Bertram's annoyance, as he felt such royalty far beneath him. We had a large and valuable suite. So Ethel took one for herself and the Count on the same floor. That amused me.

One night, very late, Bertram and I had a polite free-for-all. He had been talking to Consuelo on the long-distance phone; and I had sat by making fun of everything he said and giving him messages to de-

liver. So he got mad, which was stupid and wasted a lot of time. So mad did he get, that Bertram, in his pajamas and bathrobe, bounced out of our quarters and swore he'd spend the night with the Count. (You can't picture how mad that was, because you don't know how Bertram detested that little wasp of a Count.)

Well, out goes Bertie, and I, in a lace nightie, went tearing out into the hall after him. You know how impetuous we girls can get. Bang went my door, and there stood Bertie and I in the corridor of the St. Regis—locked out! In two seconds, Bertie forgot how mad he was in his panic of how utterly immodest I was! (He really didn't remember his mad until next morning.) Together we raced through the corridors to Ethel's suite, hoping and praying no nice-lady-from-Boston would meet us on the way. Ethel was taking a bath. We stood and knocked on her door for three whole minutes, before she let us in. And I wished you could have seen her expression of annoyance change into a shriek of laughter that upset Bertie's sense of justice. . . . At least she gave me a robe, and then she phoned down to the clerk and asked him to open our door for us. And bring us our key.

Twenty minutes later, Bertie and I crept back to our choice little love-nest, and giggled ourselves to sleep. . . . I often wondered what Consuelo was doing after that phone call. . . .

My apartment at the San Remo was sublet, so I had to look for a new address. Meanwhile, I found that Marion was in the hospital with appendicitis. (It really *was* appendicitis!) So I went up to visit her, and talk her to sleep. Poor Marion! She was inconsolable. Mark had promised her a big part in a new show, and now she couldn't take it. Even though Mark had promised her a lead in his very next production, Marion sobbed indefatigably. I think probably Marion had been saving up a lot of tears for a long while, and being ill gave her a good chance of shedding them. . . .

Bertie left me in the St. Regis when he went to Newport, telling me to take my time about finding a new place. I intended to. I intended to break with Bertie utterly and finally before I put any name-plate on a new door. And I felt breaking with him had to be handled cautiously.

For two week-ends he ambled into New York, all hot and jumpy over "business." Then, once, when I never realized it, I kissed Bertie goodbye for the last time. Three days later, I got word that he had pneumonia. I phoned Consuelo, but she could hardly talk for her tears. I called again the next day and asked if he needed his personal secretary. She asked me to do a string of things in New York for them. That kept me busy for days; but during that rush, one thing stood out prominently in my mind.

Among other tasks, there was a certain bank

president I had to visit. The moment I was ushered into his office, I felt myself go white.

"There," I whispered to myself, "is the kind of a man I'd like to know. God—to be loved by a man like that. . . !"

It only lasted a second. I caught myself the instant he spoke. I sat by his desk and talked business affairs with him. I watched him while he telephoned Consuelo. I waited while he sent for papers.

Yes, he could take care of everything. If I'd come back the following morning at eleven, everything would be in order. He'd deliver the papers into my hands himself. I could take a train straight to Newport with them. . . .

I left his office a bit delirious. Seriously, genuinely, earnestly delirious. . . . His name was Arnold J. Thornley. . . . God, all my life I'd been looking for a man like that! He'd be the kind who was a square-shooter . . . I knew it . . . A real he-man. . . .

Some people talk about love at first sight; and yet, as they say, love is blind. . . .

I put him completely out of my mind. I was very busy putting him completely out of my mind.

But the next morning I was there sharp at eleven, and never felt so nervous as during the five minutes I had to wait for Arnold J. Thornley.

He stood up as I entered. I wasn't crazy. He was just as nice as I had remembered. He had a strained,

self-conscious look in his eyes. And a quick, warm smile.

I took the train to Newport that afternoon. Spent the night in Consuelo's house. Never saw Bertie. I found a lot of things to do that Consuelo couldn't think of; and she was grateful in a wild-eyed sort of way. She couldn't talk much; she didn't eat at all. It wasn't just dramatics. Consuelo was as frightened as a child.

Often during the night, I went down to her. Tried to make her go to bed. She'd stand outside his door and cry. I wanted to cry, too, but I felt strangely ashamed to. Bertie in there—meeting his God. . . .

At four o'clock in the morning, one of the doctor's came out and knocked at Consuelo's room, and motioned to her with an antiseptic finger. She could hardly get to her feet.

I stood in the corridor, watching her go in to Bertram's room. I heard her cry. I wished she wouldn't cry. He shouldn't hear her cry . . . I wished I could just get a glimpse of him . . . Just to tell him . . . I was fond of him. . . .

They brought Consuelo out about a half hour later. I was still standing in the corridor. My feet were frozen.

Right by me, they carried Consuelo. The doctor came out of her room later, and told me. Bertram B. Byrne was dead.

Even then, I didn't cry. I felt like kneeling down

and thanking God I hadn't broken with Bertie before he died. But I had no God to kneel down to. . . . I didn't know any prayers . . . I could only remember part of one I used to mumble when I was very very little . . . "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Bless the bed that I lay on. . . ." I caught myself saying it over and over . . . My mind stuck on the Mark . . . I began to think of Marion and her promised stardom. . . .

VII

Two weeks later I arrived back at the St. Regis.

Consuelo had asked me to stay. She couldn't think, and she needed me to manage things. . . . I didn't want to stay. The house was a riot. Everybody in the world seemed concerned because Bertie had died. . . . There was so much to be done. . . . So many people to see, and talk to about disagreeable things. . . . So many acknowledgements. . . .

My eyes were frozen when I first looked at Bertie —laid out in state. Thoughts went rocketing through my brain . . . "I'm going to teach you a lesson you'll never forget. . . ."

What in God's name was I doing there? Standing beside the coffin as it was being hauled out. They were shipping him home to his mother in Long Island . . . Why did they ship people, helpless and all unknowing. . . . "I've been trying to find out if you can love more than once. . . ." Poor devil . . . Poor Bertie. . . .

Consuelo invited me to his funeral. . . . Why

did she like me so much? I didn't want to go to his funeral. . . . I didn't know how to refuse. . . .

Back in the St. Regis, I opened the door of that suite, and bit my teeth hard together. It took me two hours to pack everything. But I checked out before dinner. Telephoned the Majestic Hotel, and sent my things up there. It would be near Marion, when she came out of the hospital. . . .

I knocked at Ethel's door. She had been taking care of my Peke for me. She and the Count invited me to supper. They tried to look sad.

In as humble a room and bath as I could take at the Majestic, I had my supper served alone. I took something to make me sleep. I hadn't slept for damn near a week.

The next morning Arnold Thornley telephoned me. I went down to see him, and talked for an hour about Mr. Byrne. Told him as much as I knew. I felt anything would be safe with him. Besides, I knew he had been one of Bertie's closest friends. He asked so many questions about the trip to Germany. The tears were awfully close, but I kept looking right at Thornley and he kept looking right at me. It helped a lot.

When I was about to leave, he shook hands with me.

"Miss Macy. You may be questioned . . . I don't know. . . ."

"I wouldn't betray Bertie. Besides, as far as I know, there's nothing to betray."

"I think I can take care of everything. I'm the trustee of his estate. Miss Macy—I'm glad it was you."

"Thank you."

I couldn't have said any more for a million cold cash.

At the funeral, three days later, I saw Arnold Thornley again. Mrs. Thornley was there, too. Strange woman for him! He could pass for thirty-five; she couldn't pass for anything. A tall duchess of a woman with a face as calm and untroubled as that nun back in the charity hospital, a life-time ago. . . . She reminded me very much of that nun. She had the same quiet, smooth way of talking. An exquisite statue, remote and aloof, with fearless grey eyes. . . .

Consuelo called me many times during the next few weeks. I went down to the old law office where Bertie had once overworked me in his walnut-panelled office . . . I talked to the partners . . . I met Mr. Thornley many times. Each time I talked to him, I loved him more. . . . I couldn't figure out how a man like that married an exquisite statue, remote and aloof, with fearless grey eyes. . . . He had brains, personality, magnetism, and what a physique. . . !

His manner was like a liqueur. Intimately imper-

sonal. Mellow and warming . . . with a lingering after-effect. . . .

Marion came home from the hospital. Betty-Jane was out on the road, so for the time I moved in with Marion. She wanted someone near her to cry and curse to. . . .

Along after New Year's when all his shows were open and set, Mark took Marion down to Palm Beach. I kept the apartment alone, and the colored maid along with it. Then I settled down to being virtuous and hard-working. I was sick of parties, and drinking bouts, and fed up with affairs and men-folk. I decided to be virtuous forever. I had played the game, and played it fairly well. You can go on forever shaking the same old dice. I wanted to be good, and fine and real. I wanted to be worthwhile. I had seen the man I knew I could love. If I couldn't have Arnold Thornley, I preferred to be sweet, simple and girlish. How could he ever know the noble thoughts he inspired in me? The high ideals he gave me, or the way he changed my whole outlook. . . . How could he know that I would pass his huge office building, and pick out his windows, and gaze up at them with worshiping eyes? I didn't feel cheated. It was enough to know there *was* a man like that. I hadn't believed it. To be worthy a man like that. . . .

I enjoyed being alone for a long while. Rita was expecting another baby, I learned over the phone.

Well, that let Rita out. There were innumerable letters from mama, telling me mostly of Eddie's troubles in the prison. How sad she felt that her baby boy, etc., etc. . . . Papa was out of work. . . . I would never know how grateful she was for the fifty dollars a month; she pretended to papa she had saved it. . . .

Slowly, I turned my mind to the business I wanted to start. I took several weeks to investigate. I knew the value of a dollar and I wanted to go carefully. You waste a lot of time going carefully, and you make a lot of mistakes. I don't want to bore you with anything sordid. I have to guard against myself, because my business is my prize pup and once started, I'm endless on the subject. . . .

Suffice to say (at least I hope it will suffice) that I did start my cold-cream business in the spring of 1915, and stuck to it like a burr all through the long hot summer, and then some more. So Scotch were my tendencies, that the red side of my ledger was surprisingly blank. I wore a rubber apron half the week, rolled up my sleeves, and did almost a one-woman business. Nobody was going to hook me for salaries if I could see them coming.

I didn't advertise. I got Ethel and Marion working for me. I wrote Betty-Jane and sent her a half-dozen jars. I wrote to every girl I had ever known who had once bought and liked my cold cream back in the old days. I wrote Consuelo, and when she got

back from a trip to Saratoga, she helped a lot. Swell person, Consuelo. I sent cream to Rita, and told her to wise up Paterson. I got up little sample jars and left them with various worthwhile people at the theatres. . . .

In a dinky dump on West 38th Street, I stood over a kitchen about as big as your bathroom, and mixed and ladled, and experimented to my heart's content. I dreamed and ate cold-cream.

Marion was in Maine for the summer, resting and getting back her strength. She came home late in August (on the day Rita had another baby boy, to whom I was *not* asked to be godmother), and bunked in with me again. Mark wanted us to take a larger apartment; so we did, two flights up, and I still paid the same. Maybe I was a sort of chaperone to Marion. Ethel was with us quite a while at the time, for her game little Count had gone back to France to fight. I hoped he used his sling-shot. At any rate, she divorced him, or he divorced her (not that either of them was particular), and by the following February Ethel married a movie director, and kissed us goodbye to go to Hollywood. (Incidentally, by hounding her nervous, I got quite a fair business out of Hollywood, and before that Spring, I had hooked up with a girl there to handle my western business.)

The only other things of note that happened in 1915 were, that I became a blonde (and I should

have done it long ago; it was swell even if it was a lot of trouble); and Marion became a leading lady at last. Quite a success, with her own publicity expert; but just because several newspapers remarked that Marion's voice was weak, she spent days crying, and then months and months warbling until it became almost unbearable to live with her.

The following year, however, brought many many changes. To begin with, Marion's poor little lame brother died! And wouldn't it happen right on the night that Marion's next show opened? And wouldn't she and Mark just have a big fight over it? And wouldn't she be a riot in New York just at a time when she hadn't the spirit to enjoy her success?

Poor Marion. Her mother came on to New York and kept house for us. She wasn't used to New York. She wasn't used to being called Mrs. Moore. When, after all, the guy she had married had been named Fishhead! And Marion and I were not used to having house kept for us. All Mrs. Moore did was cry. . . . She'd go down to the flower show and it would make her homesick, and she'd cry. She'd talk about the lack of trees and birds, and tell how she used to keep the robins all through the winter by leaving food for them . . . And then she'd cry some more. She went to see Marion's show, and cried. Nobody knew just why. She took one good look at Mark, and cried harder than ever. Poor Mark tried to be nice to her, but Mrs. Moore didn't understand his line.

. . . Marion tried to be fearfully good to her ma; but ma got shocked at everything, and she thought we were hellions on extravagance. If we took her to a restaurant, she'd study the prices and pick out something for sixty cents—be it a salad or a club sandwich. . . .

Mark complained, and why shouldn't he? Marion got mad, and why shouldn't she? They had spat after spat, and Marion got nerves and temperament. Honest to God, that was the beginning of Marion's temperament. Unfortunately, she was successful enough to get away with it; and she's had temperament ever since. Even after Mrs. Moore once more became Mrs. Fishhead, and went back to Joliet to live and feed robins in peace . . . (Which was not for more than a year, and by that time all of us had vertical lines between our eyebrows.)

Meanwhile, my business, (to which I had added a hand-lotion, and an astringent cleanser) was growing like the weed it was. I hied me to a real estate agent and took three weeks to find uppity quarters, —on Seventh Avenue. The real estate agent, Howard Gorham, was a charming feller except that his lips looked as if he had spent all his childhood playing tunes on a comb (covered with McManus toilet paper, I hope!). . . . He was nice, and suburban, and quite a little athlete, in a perfectly refined way. He, being twenty-eight and quite unattached (legally), I deigned to go out with him more than oc-

casionally. He had a nice two-seater roadster (My God, how I hate open cars), and we would drive to Long Beach, to Greenwich, to a country-club he belonged to in Rye, to Gedney Farms, to the May-December Farm, and even to Coney Island.

He was the rare kind could relax you and still let you be virtuous. I'm afraid he learned about women from me, though; and that I put ideas into his head. He needed a few ideas. At any rate, Howard was my one standby, and believe me the evenings spent with him, after the ten or twelve hours a day at my business, were a big relief. Besides, he knew suburban girls who were "crazy to do something" and who would work for me for less than could keep them in bathsalts. Introduced me to wholesale people by the score, and it was through Howard (indirectly) that I eventually landed in the department stores with my cold-creams and lotions. (By that time Marion's publicity expert did a few tid-bits for me too, and it was really to gorgeous myself that I became a blonde!) Is it worth mentioning that the department store where I had once worked was the last to carry my products?

There were two prize incidents in 1916.

First, Eddie, like a bad penny, showed up. He had served his two year stretch in Chicago and never wanted to see the city again. By writing to mama he had visited Rita (who was horribly cool and didn't ask him to be a godfather), and finally located me.

So one fine October evening, Eddie rang my doorbell.

Our greeting was strained, to say the least. Eddie, with the finest clothes anyone could ask, looked fit enough to introduce to Marion's mother, who hovered politely by my right arm. But Eddie and I had too much to say to each other, to have a Fishhead come between us. So we went out to dinner at the Plaza Grill. Oh yes, Eddie, the jailbird, looked quite well enough for the Plaza Grill.

"Well," I said. "Where did you get that hat?"

He grinned.

"I had my swag buried. You don't think I served two years for the local color, do you?"

"Where did you have it buried?"

"Right where I could dig it up, two days later."

"Was it—enough?"

"About nine thousand dollars."

"That's enough. What are you going to do now?"

"Jesus, it's good to eat real food! Want to bet a horse with me tomorrow, Dora? I know it's all set."

"Sure. You can put fifty dollars up for me."

"Aren't you a flyer! I've got five hundred on it myself. God Almighty, what it means to have to get a glass of beer. . . ."

His pale eyes were jumpy. I suddenly remembered how he had ordered beer for me in Philadelphia, and how warm I felt . . . I was so forlorn, and Eddie had seemed like a Good Samaritan to me. . . .

I put my hand on his.

"It was nice of you to come to see me, Eddie."

"Oh, you and me always hit it off. You're all right, Dora, when you don't get touchy. . . . You're some swell looking dame too. Them goldy-locks are pretty nifty. Makes you look so delicate-like and saintly. You're not saintly, are you, Dora?"

I studied him as he buried his lips greedily in the beer again. I felt awfully tender and close to Eddie. Poor kid. . . .

"Eddie," I said. "Why don't you come into business with me? I'm doing awfully well. It's filthy with profit, that beauty business. . . ."

He sawed his steak energetically.

"Nope. I'd be fine for a few months, and then I'd rob the till. I'd rather rob somebody else's till, Dora. . . ."

"Great God, Eddie. Haven't you had enough of jails?"

"The boogey man won't get me again. I've got a little tie-up that's perfectly straight. . . ."

"Whadya mean straight?"

"Oh. You let me run my own little show. I pay as I go. I don't ask you for anything. If you don't want to be friends with me—why—here's to the parting of the ways."

He lifted his glass. I didn't lift mine.

"I wish——"

"Aw, cut it out. You're worse than mama."

"How did she look, Eddie?"

"All right."

"How was papa?"

"He's had six teeth out. I didn't see him to talk to."

"The same old house still?"

"Very still. I gave mama fifty dollars, but she wouldn't take it. What the hell?"

After that, I saw Eddie spasmodically. He wouldn't tell me where he lived or what he was doing. But every so often, he'd show up at my apartment, and if no one were there, we'd sit around and talk; otherwise we'd go out to dinner.

Not until December did he ask me for money. I gave him fifty dollars. Two weeks later he asked for a hundred, and I refused. I wanted to know how come and whither away. Then just before Christmas, he busted in on me late one night and said he had to have a thousand dollars or he'd "get it in the neck." Money he owed one of his gang, who demanded instant payment, or else. . . . A debt of honor. . . .

That made me laugh. But my laughter stopped short at the sight of Eddie's obvious fright. I questioned him, and he told me enough. He was in with some gambling ring, and evidently they thought nothing of bumping off a guy who welched on a

dirty little hold-up. The names he mentioned gave me heart failure.

I wrote him out a check, and got an I.O.U. I didn't even ask him to go straight. What was the use?

The very next evening, I had another visitor. A girl stood at my doorway. A small dark-eyed girl, dressed like a French turkey, her midget eyes red around the edges. She asked me if I were Miss Macy and if she could talk to me.

"What about?" I demanded.

"You're Eddie's sister, ain't you?"

I needed no more. I brought her into my bedroom and closed the door. A half hour later, I drew a warm bath, dumped in some scented salts, laid out powder and towel, and left her to her own resources.

Back in my bedroom, where I could hear the poor kid splashing, I telephoned Eddie. I told him to get a license in the morning, and meet me and Lucy at City Hall by eleven o'clock. Or else I'd stop payment on that thousand dollar check, and I didn't mean perhaps.

Eddie stormed. Eddie raved. Eddie called Lucy things that would never have been accepted by Western Union. Eddie came down to my apartment a half hour later. I told him calmly that I had already sent a night letter to my bank to hold payment on his check. Either he married Lucy, or he

found somebody else who could give him a thousand dollars over night.

Lucy heard him, but I had the bathroom door locked and I wouldn't let her come out. Eddie stood in front of that door and gave Lucy a recital of what he knew about her history. How did he know it was his kid, in the first place?

So I just lit a cigarette and let him yell. When he was all through, I said; you'll marry her whether it's your baby or not.

After all, I had once been in the same fix myself.

So Eddie shook his fist in my face, and swore he'd do this and that, and called me a so-and-so.

When he left I was quite exhausted. And Lucy was in hysterics. I took her out and fed her, and then I brought her back, and dressed her. My things fit her fairly well, particularly when we all pitched in and helped alter; Marion, Mrs. Fishhead (who had never heard such language before and was so nervous she couldn't thread the needle), Lucy and myself. We all gave her presents. Marion even saw to it that she had something blue, something old and something new . . . or whatever it is brides crave. . . .

She slept in our living room on the couch, that night. At ten next morning Eddie showed up, shaved and sulky. He had the license. But since Lucy had her beliefs, we went to The Little Church Around

The Corner, instead of City Hall. Marion was the one who arranged that much.

They were married, Lucy and Eddie, two days before Christmas, at noon, and I called my bank at once and ordered the check paid. Then I tore up Eddie's I.O.U.—as a wedding present.

Lucy kissed me, and Marion and Mrs. Fishhead. She was all for kissing. Just that kind. She thought every time you said Hello, you ought to be kissed. . . .

So I took Eddie aside, and I said:

"Now you can go to hell as far as I'm concerned. Or else you can be a sport, and take your medicine. I'm perfectly willing to give the kid a lift. She's all right, that girl. I've talked to her half the night. If you'd give her a chance, she'll make you a mighty nice little wife."

"Aw, she's a——"

"She's no worse than you and I were once! Just remember that."

Then I asked them both to Christmas dinner. And Eddie accepted. Marion went out with Mark, perforce; so I took Mrs. Fishhead, Lucy and Eddie to Murray's on 42nd Street, where Mrs. Fishhead was shocked, and Lucy was thoroughly thrilled. Eddie seemed to detest her much less that night. He was quite tolerant of her. . . .

We went back to the apartment, and trimmed a little tree, and gave presents all around to each

other. . . . I even got Mrs. Fishhead to taste a highball. . . .

I offered Lucy a job down at my place, and suddenly Eddie mounted his high-horse.

"No thanks, Dora. My wife doesn't have to work. Besides, she's got to take care of herself now. You know how it is. Just as obliged, though."

So I shrugged and pretended to be hurt. But I never felt closer to Eddie. . . .

Finally—the last day of the year—came the one real good-honest thrill of my life. Howard Gorham had booked me weeks ahead for a New Year's Eve party, and when New Year's Eve came, I felt like anything but a party. Only Howard was the believing, childlike kind you hate to disappoint. And there was no real reason to disappoint him. I just didn't feel like a party.

So I dressed carefully (thank God!) and when he called for me at nine o'clock, in his car, I roused all the spirit I could to match his eager excitement. We drove out to Gedney Farms.

Don't ask about the party. I don't remember what happened; or where Howard went; or how we got separated, or whether the food or the music was good bad or indifferent. All I know is that the lights went out at midnight, amid shrieking, horns, bells, and other hiccoughs, and somebody kissed me. Then somebody's arm went around me, and drew me toward the door.

I hadn't been kissed like that for ages. . . . I went right along with that somebody, to the door, and out into the enclosed porch. I felt a coat being thrown over me, and without even speaking, I let myself be let out into the coldness of the night. . . . I looked up—and even the stars were trembling for me. . . .

"I've been watching you all evening," a voice said to me. I knew I had heard that voice before. . . .

I pushed my hair off my face, and turned my back to the wind.

Arnold J. Thornley had his arms around my shoulders.

"Good Lord!" I gasped.

"I haven't been able to get you out of my mind. . . . I've been thinking of you, Dora Macy. . . ."

He was terribly close. And suddenly I got furious, and with my two hands against his chest, I pushed him away.

"You're drunk!" I flared at him.

He swayed. His eyes closed and opened laboriously, and wet his lips.

"You're drunk!" I repeated, tearfully. "Don't! Don't come near me. I hate you. I hate you. You're *drunk!*"

Somehow I clumped my way back into the house. . . . I went to the ladies' room, and tried not to be a fool. . . . There were other girls there, trying not to be fools. . . . Women who were ill. . . .

Women trying to patch up broken shoulder straps. . . .

Eventually, I got my wrap, and went in search of Howard Gorham. It took me thirty minutes, and five drinks, believe it or not, before I located him. He was furiously angry that we had become separated. He hated the damn party.

He drove home very slowly, and I hardly listened to his telling about other New Years; and about how the last year had brought him my friendship. . . . I let him kiss me several times. . . . I didn't even feel his kisses. . . . We stopped somewhere in town, for a hot drink and a sandwich. We stopped again for a flat tire. It was the dull dawn of 1917 before Howard Gorham left me at my apartment. . . .

I undressed mechanically. I had a splitting headache. I could hear Mrs. Fishhead crying in the next room, and I couldn't spunk up enough feeling to go in and speak to her. . . . Very noisily Marion came home, an hour later. . . . I heard her and her mother's voices, and wished they were both in Zulu. . . . I was so damned mad. I wasn't mad. I was just tired. . . . Hell, they were all alike. . . . Here I'd been virtuous (not without occasional regrets) for more than a year just on the memory of that face and that voice. . . . Just a drunken sot. . . . Rotten lousy hypocrite. . . . Bum. . . .

VIII

THE next day I got flowers from Arnold Thornley. Beautiful yellow roses and blue delphinium, with nothing on the card but his name. Lucy dropped in that afternoon to wish me a Happy New Year, and I gave her the flowers.

More than two weeks passed before I heard again from A. J. Thornley. Then he called me on the phone, around six one evening, explaining that he had been away on a business trip; telling me how sorry he was, and pleading that I come to dinner with him. I regretted I was busy that evening. Boy, was I icy! (But an ice bath only makes the blood glow warmer. . . .)

"I'm sorry dear, So sorry dear, I'm sorry I made you cry. . . ." Aw, to hell with it. . . .

Nary a syllable from Thornley after that, and one of my shoulders got higher than the other from shrugging it. . . . I dug into my business and worked like a truck-horse. . . .

Then one night in early March, I went out riding through the mud and slosh of winter's dying

gasps, with Howard Gorham. We went to Meadow Croft Country Club. And right over a table for two, Howard proposed to me! He hardly dared,—but he loved me so. The most wonderful girl in the world . . . (where had I heard that before?) If I could only love him, if I would only be his wife, there was nothing he couldn't accomplish in the world. . . .

I sat and watched his eyes grow childish. . . . The earnestness of his stumbling words. . . . I tried to be flippant, but I couldn't. . . . I leaned over and put my hand on his. Told him he was the greatest pal I'd ever known, and that he was the only man I'd ever met who made me believe in what is known as the stronger sex. . . . Later, I lectured him. I told him nice girls were best. . . . There's twice as many straights as flushes in the deck. . . . (All the while, I was remembering how Eddie had told me he would rather rob someone's else till; and suddenly I knew how he felt,—a leopard can't change his sports). . . . I told Howard my conscience wouldn't let me marry him. He asked me what was conscience, after all; and I said that it was the memory of unpleasant experiences. . . .

I pretty much succeeded in convincing him that I was only a warmed-up left-over. . . . He didn't like it. . . . We drove back home slowly, breathing in the incense of the stirring spring. . . . I felt satisfied, as he kissed me goodnight—and goodbye (for

he preferred not to see me again). . . . I felt very satisfied. An artist is someone who knows how to end things. . . . And I felt I had been an artist worthy of a good hanging in any gallery. . . .

But when I got inside I felt all drippy. The poor kid, wanting me to be Mrs. Gorham. . . . I cried my heart out because it didn't appeal to me to become Mrs. Gorham. . . . Because I was in love with a mirage . . . an idol who didn't come to life. . . .

Consuelo Byrne, out of a grey sky, called me up the next day, and invited me to lunch with her and Arnold Thornley "to talk over business." Besides, she hadn't seen me in so long. . . .

I smelled a rat, but it was a nice rat. So next noon, I showed up at the Netherlands Hotel, looking my most angelic, around one o'clock. And it's quite an achievement to look angelic around one, when you work for a living. . . .

There was Arnold Thornley plunk in the lobby. . . .

We shook hands, and sat down to wait for Consuelo. She made me madder with each moment that passed, and yet I was so grateful to her. . . . Arnold Thornley never seemed more handsome, or more charming.

He never referred to New Year's Eve. We talked about Consuelo's affairs. Somebody in Washington had the bright idea that Bertram started the war.

Because of that trip to Germany. Which was the most cuckoo thing Washington ever got hot over, and believe me that city is apt to sizzle at the sight of a match. I wondered, vaguely, if *I* had started the war, maybe, with the wrong brief-case. . . . Then we talked about my business. And Mr. Thornley was more interested in it, than he was in his own bank. Begged me to let him help. He could give me such good counsel on investments, contracts, or what have you?

Consuelo arrived eventually. Thornley took us first and bought us each an orchid to wear. Then we lunched, and damned if a word was spoken about Bertram's affairs throughout the whole time. We talked of the opera, and of the theatres, and of Palm Beach where Connie had just been. . . . I said I'd never seen Palm Beach, not even in my palmiest days. . . .

We were glued to that table for nearly two hours. And when we parted, Consuelo had invited me to an opera-party a week the following Wednesday! She had an opera box on odd Wednesdays, which I thought was just doing things half way. . . .

Anyway, I couldn't help being thrilled. Thornley left us, and Connie and I walked arm in arm up Fifth Avenue to Black Starr and Frost, where I left her to entertain herself. All during the walk, she described Arnold's virtues. . . .

A new gown was necessary for the week from

the following Wednesday. I had my hair bobbed, and curled like a child's. I borrowed Marion's ermine coat (which Mark had given her). And thus, I went to dinner at Consuelo's house on Madison Avenue, and you should have seen me put one foot in front of the other. . . .

Arnold was right there for dinner. And a man named Forthright Stumpp completed the picture. (Can you imagine any sane mother naming her helpless infant Forthright?) Well, Connie called him "Hap" and that was a comfort. (She married him a year later.) Connie wore cloth of gold, but I hadn't thought it advisable to be so obvious on such an occasion. I wore white satin (which is always good for a first impression), and a huge white ostrich fan. But not a single piece of jewelry. Never wear jewelry when you first consider a new love; it leaves him nothing to adorn. Later, of course, you wear his jewelry, and nothing else but. . . .

The bob, and the childish curls left Arnold a bit restless. For some time, he yanked his neck out of his collar. . . . Then, as we were about to leave for the opera, he put the ermine wrap about me and whispered, "Your hair is like candlelight, Dora. . . ."

Maybe he'd been reading the classics.

The opera was Faust, and I wondered if Connie had picked it with malice aforethought. . . .

Arnold saw me home, and before we said good-

night, I had promised to go driving with him a week from the following Sunday.

I needed that long to think things over.

Meanwhile, war was declared. I mean, we decided to get into the scrap, just after somebody had insisted we "were too proud to fight. . . ." When I went out driving with Thornley, we talked about it a great deal. (He told me a lot of truths that weren't printed until long after the Kaiser sewed himself up for the winter in Doorn). . . . We went to the Sleepy Hollow Country Club up around Tarrytown. . . . The grandest country club I've ever seen. . . . Full of sweet memories for me. . . . And on that first day, we didn't do any you-and-I discussing at all. We talked of the War, of Washington Irving, of real estate, of my business, of Consuelo, of investments, and then some more about the War. . . . I couldn't eat much. . . . I was more in love with him as each minute ticked by—and it was so damned unfair!

We drove back, late, in his limousine.

The next day, he sent me some more yellow roses and blue delphinium—and I kept them.

After that, I saw Arnold about once a week. Then twice a week . . . then almost every evening, and sometimes for luncheon, too. . . . I took the Wall Street Journal, and got books on finance. . . . I wanted to talk intelligently; and when I really want

to, I can do it. . . . We knew we loved each other —terribly. But we never mentioned it.

Then one bright May day, Howard Gorham phoned me. The first time I had heard from him since his proposal. . . . He asked me to please have dinner with him. We went to the Claremont on Riverside Drive, and Howard told me he was leaving for Plattsburg the following morning. I've never been to the Claremont since. . . .

(God, eleven months later, I kissed Captain Gorham goodbye, and if ever I was faithful in writing to anyone, it was to him.)

Meanwhile, Marion was getting pesky with temperament. She and Mark had one blow-up after another. Marion and her ma quarrelled twice every twenty-four hours. Presently, Mrs. Fishhead decided to live her own life. She went out to visit her sister in Detroit, and stayed there for seven months. (I hadn't even known the poor woman had a sister, or I would have suggested it ages before.) Finally Mrs. Fishhead took up "living her own life" in a serious way. She adopted some poor little three-year-old morsel in Detroit, and went back to Joliet to live again and bring up "Jackie." (Isn't it significant that Jackie was lame? Boy, page Mr. Freud!)

That was a rotten deal to give Marion. Because gossip spreads like mercury, and before long everybody was whispering that it was Marion's child, and nodding wisely. It couldn't have been Marion's

child, but gossips never stop to figure things out. . . .

Anyway, that settled Mrs. Fishhead, and we were glad.

Marion and Mark made up for a little space, and then they had a head-on that seemed absolutely unpatchable, even with economic adhesive. So Marion (as soon as her show closed) went out to the coast to visit Ethel. More of which I shall relate, eventually. . . .

For at the time, I was having my own little nervous spell. Lucy's baby was born in June. A little boy which she called Ed*ward*. My freckle-faced brother was as chalky as dried-up paste. He, who faced danger, disgrace, and death for every dollar he grafted; he who mingled and jawed with gangsters and thugs, was as weak as a pigeon over the arrival of his son.

Now, I was perfectly willing to do anything within reason, but I could no more go near Lucy, or visit the new-born prize than hold my head under water. Nothing—not even Eddie's slobbery tears—could have dragged me to that hospital. He tried to understand, and I didn't give a damn whether he did or not. I just couldn't go babies, and that was that!

I sent Lucy everything I could think of. And the baby too. I let Eddie get good and tight in my apartment and rhapsodize all over the place about

what a good-for-nothing louse he really was. But my own sister Rita had already had four (one set of twins), and I'd never been near her. It was just a form of insanity, I guess. It was almost as if I thought babies were contagious. . . .

Eddie brought Lucy home the third week in June, and even then I simply could not go to see her.

Meanwhile, Arnold had been to Italy with Mrs. Thornley for over a month, and all the time I lived in dread—remembering the Lusitania. . . . When he returned he brought me a gift . . . an old and magnificent priest's vestment, heavily embroidered, which I was supposed to wear as a wrap. . . . I hung it on my wall. . . .

Then Arnold and I saw each other constantly. Mrs. Thornley and the three sons were summering in a huge estate up on the Hudson River, where the view was breath-taking. Arnold went up there religiously. Slowly we began to talk about ourselves. It was like polite ice-skating. . . .

"I think you're marvellous, Dora, the way you've built that business up out of nothing."

"Not out of nothing. I had a wonderful backing."

"Bertram, of course. I know."

"How did you know?"

"I know almost everything about you, honey."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't be offended if I apply business methods."

He laughed and lit a cigar. "I know all about Bertram, of course. . . ."

"Does Consuelo?"

"No. Never even guesses."

"Strange."

"Most wives prefer not to guess. If they're wise."

"What else do you know, Arnold?"

"What does it matter? It hasn't made any difference with me. I'm no saint myself."

"It matters a lot. I want you to know—all about me. But I'd hate to have to tell you. How much else do you know?"

"I know all about your brother, and I think he's a dangerous little fool."

"Oh—he was just born that way."

"I know about Marion Moore, of course, and her Mark Anthony. And your divorced Countess. I know all about you, child. You see, I love you!"

That was the first time!

"Just say it again, Arnold."

"I love you. . . . I love you. . . ."

We were in my apartment, having an appetizer just before going out to dinner. I got up and walked over to Marion's piano and lit a cigarette. He followed me and put his arms about me.

"Can't you tell me now—that you love me, Dora?"

"Wait. Wait just a bit, Arnold. Tell me, please, what else do you know?"

"I—know about Howard Gorham."

"There was nothing——"

"I know that. There's been no one since Bertram, has there?"

"No one."

He sat down on the piano bench, and began to play gently. . . . I stood leaning over the piano, watching him. . . . Arnold played remarkably well. . . . His fingers were drifting over the deep melody of Tschaikowsky's Fifth. . . .

"Please stop, darling."

He turned around, and picked up his cigar again.

"Do you really want to know, Dora, how much I've learned about you?"

"I must know."

"Well, there was Professor Briggs. . . ."

"Arnold! How did you find that out?"

He eyed his cigar ash tentatively. . . .

"There was a boy back in Philadelphia. I don't know his name. I really don't care. You were very young, weren't you?"

"Sixteen."

"Was there ever anyone else?"

He was looking straight at me. My eyes ached, way in the back of my head. . . . I wanted to tell him everything. . . . I didn't despise him, strangely enough, for his peculiar spy system. . . .

"Yes. There was. It didn't count, though. . . .

Just one night . . . I was . . . I was just crazy, I guess. . . .

"Who was he?"

"His name—was—Larry Grey. I never saw him again."

"Here in New York?"

"Yes. You know—the Honest Chocolate people. . . ."

"Oh."

His fingers went back to the piano and fumbled the same melody. . . .

"Was that all, Dora?"

"No. I had a baby. . . ."

"I rather thought so. The boy back in Philadelphia?"

"Yes."

"It died?"

"Yes—it died. . . ." (God, I couldn't tell him the truth about that. . .!)

"But there was no other man—ever?"

"No other. Ever."

"Then," he jerked off with the Fifth Symphony and got up to face me, "I'm the fifth. . . . I knew it, really. I'm glad you told me, though. . . . Because, I love you so much, Dora."

"And you, Arnold?"

He shook his head, wryly.

"You don't really want to know."

"No. I don't want to know. What possible difference could it make?"

"You'll tell me you love me then?"

"I've loved you, Arnold, since the first moment I saw you. I've kept you in my heart all that time. And it's nearly three years now. . . . I love you with all my heart and soul and strength. . . ."

From that moment on, life began to sing for me. I asked for nothing else. Arnold loved me. I didn't care how or when or where. He truly loved me, and I loved him. It wasn't just an affair. Nor just an arrangement. It was the love that only comes once —the love that Bertram had told me about. . . .

Nothing was ever planned. We never discussed the wherefores. Never schemed beyond the today. I knew Arnold would take care of everything, as he saw fit. With Marion away, I had the entire apartment to myself. It was sweet and comfortable and —home!

More and more often Arnold and I were together. There was no shame; no disguise; no attempt to masque our attachment. Everyone came gradually to take it as a matter of course. Perhaps Consuelo was most to be thanked for that. She was so kind and so charming to me. She seemed so happy for Arnold's sake, and spoke so highly of him. . . .

Except for occasional week-ends, I would not leave town all summer. My business was at the place

where it was either going to be very big,—or die. I worked hard—and loved it.

Marion wrote me often. She was making a picture out on the coast. (Just showing Mark she could get along without him!) She enjoyed the change, and described amazingly the humpty-dumpty life of Hollywood. . . . But in each letter she asked if I heard of Mark. . . . What was he doing? Where was he? She simply would not write him, and evidently he returned the compliment. . . . There was a boy out in Hollywood, a young and clean-eyed movie star, who paid her devoted attention. . . . Oftener and oftener. Marion mentioned this actor—one Clark Adams. It worried me. Marion has never been attracted to a young and clean-eyed boy. . . . Poor kid had never had much of a chance. . . .

In August came a period that still hurts to speak of.

Eddie again! Eddie, showing up at my apartment, cowed and thin as a lamp-post. Eddie in trouble for keeps! Eddie framed by his gang. The sacrificial goat in a scandal that demanded retribution.

The very day after he came, he was arrested.

I told Arnold about it. I begged and pleaded with him to do something—anything to save Eddie. Granted my brother had seventeen arrests on his record. Granted he was a gambler, a robber, a thug —anything you had to call him! But Eddie was not guilty of murder. He was not guilty of this crime!

And he was no squealer! Nothing could get him to open his lips, and tell who was behind his present predicament. . . .

Arnold had little sympathy for Eddie. But there wasn't much I could ask Arnold he wouldn't do for me. He promised help, and I felt safer. I went to Eddie to the Tombs, and whispered to him. . . .

There is no need going through the whole agonizing details. Arnold kept himself out of it entirely. A lawyer (who was a friend of a friend of his) handled the affair. I'll never forget the horror of those six weeks. Of trying to comfort Lucy, and trying to give courage to Eddie.

Eddie never told, I know that much. But in six weeks Edide was out breathing pure air.

Then I learned that Arnold had talked to Eddie, and made a bargain. If he got Eddie out of jail, Eddie was to enlist—immediately.

And Eddie did. Eight days later, he was down in Yaphank learning how to obey orders. . . . Whether it was merely fate or not, I can't tell; but in December, Eddie sailed for France.

I didn't even know until after he was gone. He sent me a letter, asking me to tell Lucy, and to take care of her . . . admitting that he hadn't always been so nice to Lucy. . . . Giving me his regiment, and begging me to write.

Just after I came back from a week-end with Arnold, I received that letter. Lucy had gone home

to her mother in Syracuse, baby and all. . . . I decided not to write her. . . . She would be back after Christmas, and it would be easier to talk to her. . . .

Marion returned east in December, too. Saw to it that Mark knew she was on deck, and after two weeks of silence from him, she immediately hooked up with another producer. (As an actress, I mean.) Anyone would take Marion at that time—and she was getting a thousand a week, too! On her opening, Mark sent her a telegram of congratulations. Perhaps Marion would have answered, except that the young and clean-eyed movie-actor suddenly showed up in New York for the Christmas holidays. Gibberishly in love with Marion. . . .

She was living at the Majestic Hotel, near me; and we saw a great deal of each other. She okeyed Arnold enthusiastically, and I had to do the same for Clark. But I didn't like the boy from the start. He seemed weak, egotistic, and spoiled. . . . He had been married before, and his famous young movie-actress wife had died on their honeymoon. . . . Drowned in the blue waters of Hawaii. . . .

Clark could only stay in New York for three weeks. The idol of the silver screen had to rush back to pose some more for his adoring public. . . . Marion went to the train with him, and acted like he was her first-love. . . . Clark long-distanced her during his stop-over at Chicago. Sent her telegrams

the size of a good rug. . . . Phoned her every night after he hit Hollywood. . . .

Marion's eyes got a bit crazed. . . .

Unfortunately, I didn't interfere. As fate would have it, I left with Arnold, just after New Year's for Palm Beach (where combining business with pleasure, I opened a branch-office).

That was really our honeymoon. That was the real beginning of everything between Arnold and myself. There were no discussions. No vulgarity. No hiding. I was his mistress, admittedly and quite unashamed; everyone knew it. I met all his friends, and they accepted me as they accepted the weather. In all the years that I loved Arnold, our only mutual and unmentioned concern, was that we were never at the same resorts, functions or affairs where Mrs. Thornley went. . . . No doubt she knew all about me. I know she did, eventually. But neither of us were obtrusive or obvious.

Arnold had been married seventeen years when I first met him (he married at the age of twenty-one). He had three sons, Roy aged 15, Hubbard (Mrs. Thornley's maiden name) aged 12, and Dick, aged 8. He had also taken under his wing, a little girl named Gloria Potter, whose guardian he had become five years previous, when her father had died. The girl (a wealthy child of no mean social-and-family disinction) seemed to fill the need Arnold felt for a little daughter. He was very devoted

to the child, and often expressed the hope that one of his sons might marry her. She was thirteen at the time, and Arnold was highly enthusiastic over her evident talent for art. Many times he showed me her sketches and paintings . . . there was no doubt of her ability. . . . She was eager to study sculpture, and he engaged a very prominent artist to come three times a week to train her. . . . Roy was to fill his father's shoes, and Hubbard thought he'd be an engineer. Little Dick had his father's musical tendencies. . . .

I am telling all these things because they were an important phase of our interest together. There was nothing (except, possbily, Mrs. Thornley) that we did not share. All through the years that followed, I knew everything the four children did. He showed me their pictures. I even sent them gifts through him (without my name). Later, after I met Roy, I gave *him* gifts openly. I advised with Arnold on their education, on their problems—on anything about them that worried him. He was devoted to his four children (for Gloria was like a daughter to him, and one of the family, for all she didn't bear his name); and whatever interested Arnold interested me.

When we returned to New York from Palm Beach in late February, I went back to my apartment as a matter of course. Marion had wired me that she had gone out to the coast. Then one midnight

she phoned me to announce breathlessly her engagement to Clark Adams! She was so frightfully happy, and so tremulous—I gave her blessings from the bottom of my heart, and wired her flowers and mailed her a rather lovely bracelet as a wedding gift. . . . But all the while I was sorry. Sorry she had fallen in love with that boy. . . .

Love is dumb, isn't it?

Her wedding was the talk of Hollywood, and landed on the front page of every newspaper in the country.

Mark came to see me that night. Just stopped in for a drink. I told him I was sorry, and that I feared for Marion. He said, "It won't last. She's just a damn fool like all women." And then he went about his business. I never told Marion about that. . . .

The greatest shock was to hear that Marion and Clark were going to Hawaii for their honeymoon. . . .

I don't know why, but I had a cold and nervous feeling about it. A premonition. . . .

But my own life was busy about then. Lucy came back from Syracuse, a washed-out little midget of misery. Her baby had died, up state on the visit home. . . . I told her about Eddie's being in France. She didn't seem upset. Just listless.

Lucy stayed in my apartment, sitting from chair to chair, and not hearing you when you spoke, for nearly a month. It was like having a ghost around.

But I understood what she was going through—that awful spell of pulling yourself back into the world. . . . I felt sorry for the funny little misfit. I tried to get her to write to Eddie each time I wrote. She wouldn't do it. She wouldn't even read the letters he sent me.

One day she burst out. Her cheeks blazed, and her eyes were padded with fury. She just let loose. She hated Eddie. He had been rotten mean to her. He never loved her. He was a good-for-nothing truck, and the army was a damn fine place for him. She hoped he had cooties. . . .

I let her cry it out and sleep it off.

Meanwhile, I was enormously occupied. Arnold planned with me for the enlarging of my business. We went trailing around in his car (the one he drove himself when he felt good; not the limousine) and searched out-of-town for a regular factory.

Arnold certainly could drive a bargain. I bought a small white-brick factory up outside of Yonkers. And nobody but girls and women working for me! (That was one of my arguments with Arnold. I wasn't interested in suffragism, though I didn't see why women couldn't make laws since they broke them as often as men! But my ambition was to have a woman's business, run completely by women; and for a long time I stuck to that rule.)

For my twenty-fifth birthday (the spring of 1918) Arnold gave me a little sports roadster to run myself

up and down to the factory. He himself taught me to drive, late a night, out on the Motor Parkway. . . . He taught me so many things, during those years; to ride well, to run a motor boat, to hunt. . .

I got Lucy interested eventually in my business. Promised her all sorts of possible advancements as the undertaking grew. I wanted her to go up to the factory and start from the beginning to learn it stage by stage. She did it, at last, and I settled her with a Mrs. Bean who lived in Yonkers, and who was a sort of guide and manager of the girls in my factory. That got Lucy off my hands nicely.

But no sooner was I relieved of her, when I got an S.O.S. from Marion of the most staggering kind. She sent me a wire from *Joliet!* Signed Marion Fishhead! Why was she back in Joliet in August, when she had been in Hawaii on a honeymoon only a few months before? . . . Her voice over the phone that midnight was almost inaudible. Marion never got shrill with hysterics; always she became inarticulate.

"You've got to come out to me, Dora. Please. I've got to see you. Can you come tomorrow?"

That's all I could get out of Marion. I phoned Arnold first thing in the morning, and we lunched together. I was frightfully upset. He helped me to take care of everything, and next morning I started off to Marion.

Lord, how she clung to me, when I reached that

funny little house. How she cried! Cried herself to sleep, while I sat beside her in the dark. . . . Talking gibberish. Painful, unholy, delirious gibberish. . . . I gave up trying to question her. I just held her tight and let her wail and jabber. . . . All I could get from her fractured words, was that Clark was terrible; she would never see Clark again—she didn't believe such people could live. . . .

Late that night she fell asleep. I tried to talk to Mrs. Fishhead, but all she could say was that she knew her daughter would come to just such a bad end. . . . What ye sow, ye reap. . . . I wanted to shake her until her false teeth would fall out. . . .

I guess I wasn't pleasant. But I sure was insistent. I learned by dragging the words out of her; first, that Marion insisted upon being Fishhead, and not Moore nor Adams. Second, that Marion was going to have a baby! Thirdly, that Dr. Thomas was to attend her.

I slept in a chair in Marion's room, all night, and soothed her off every time she woke screaming and crying. . . . In the morning, I telephoned Dr. Thomas. An hour later, I went over to see him.

Gosh, but he had changed. He still was handsome and lazy and indifferent, but oh, how seedy! Why do they let men like that rot? Not but what he seemed perfectly happy rotting. . . . I met Mrs. Thomas, too. A nice, wholesome, round-cheeked woman in a

gingham house-dress, who offered me tea, (and she meant tea!) and was truly friendly. . . .

Dr. Thomas told me as much as he knew. Marion's child would be born around the following spring, probably in March. She didn't want it, because she felt it's father was a disgrace to it. . . . She had a horrible case of neurasthenia. (A few years before, they'd have called it brain-fever, and let it go at that.) Evidently something severely shocking had happened on her honeymoon. . . . Something she wouldn't tell anyone. . . . No, he didn't know where Clark Adams was. . . . If only I could help to quiet Marion. Serious complications might result. . . .

I went back to the Fishhead shanty. Marion was lying in bed, moaning and beating herself. . . . I tried to talk, and she fought me. . . . I shook her, and argued louder than she could. . . . I gave her the powder Dr. Thomas had ordered, and finally she fell asleep.

First I telephoned Arnold, and tried to explain. He didn't know what to do; and hated me to be upset by such a miserable mess. . . . I swore I wouldn't leave Marion unless he absolutely demanded it. And if he did, I'd never forgive him. . . . Arnold meant no unkindness. He wanted to know if he could do anything. I asked him what he thought of telling Mark. He said it wasn't a bad idea at all, and did I want *him* to talk to Mark? I said yes.

Imagine Arnold talking to a man like Mark—about such a thing. The lamb!

Mark phoned me at Marion's that same night. I told him I simply could not make sense out of Marion's ravings, but that something ought to be done and done quickly. Mark, the experienced, struck right to the core. He swore he'd get Clark Adams, no matter where the bloody little hound was hiding. He'd make that boy talk, and talk damn quick.

Then I settled down to battling with Marion. Do you know what eventually quieted her to a measure of sanity? An inspiration! A victrola brought up to her room, and records that played her old song-hits. . . . Tunes she had warbled and danced to, earning thunderous applause and endless encores. . . .

Mark arrived in Joliet, five days later. I'll hand it to Mark on a silver platter, any day. He had found Clark Adams, and whether he beat him up or not, you'll never know. But he had learned the story. And then he had sent Clark, (with two men to hold his hands for him), down to Mexico City. The papers carried a story, created and nursed by Mark, that the blithe couple had extended their honeymoon and had gone to the Philippines. The story even stressed the dire exasperation of both Clark's and Marion's managers that they were jumping their

contracts. . . . A most convincing story and one that the masses enjoyed.

Maybe there's nothing in illicit love. But I wish you could have seen Mark enter Marion's room. I wish you could have heard her cry, and seen her thin arms outstretched. . . . I saw him drop on his knees beside her, sobbing. . . .

Then I left the room and made myself some coffee.

Arnold phoned me twice that night. How much longer would I be away? If Mark were there, was I needed too? He missed his blonde rag-doll. . . . I cajoled him. I even wept. I kissed him into the phone, and promised faithfully I wouldn't stay longer than another week. . . .

Mark shuffled downstairs a few hours later looking like an old and haggard infant. . . .

"She's asleep," he muttered.

"Come on in the kitchen. I've got sandwiches for you, and coffee."

He followed me. Sat and regarded the sandwiches stupidly.

"God damn him to hell!" he snarled sullenly. "The dirty rotten truck. . . . I knew he was a rotter. . . . I knew it all along. . . ."

"Eat something, Mark."

"And a child! Why in the name of God did that have to happen? A child. . . . It will ruin her career!"

"Mark, you'll get sick too."

"Well, I've got him under lock and key. I'll ruin him, so help me God. He'll never make a picture again as long as he lives. I'll put the banana peel under him everywhere he turns his heel."

"He deserves it," I agreed calmly.

"I wish I could lynch him."

"Do you mind telling me what it's all about?"

He studied me.

"I like you. I think you're a mighty fine sort, Miss Macy. I know you're Marion's best friend. But—I don't trust a living breathing soul. I'll tell you this much. I'm going to fight for that kid. And if she lives, I'm going to make her the greatest star on Broadway. If I have to hock my shirt to do it."

"Eat something, Mark."

Mark stayed for two days. Marion's face settled into thin tightness, and a light of dulled hope gleamed in her eyes. He at least made her obey orders. He talked as I've never heard anyone talk. Promising, teasing, lying, plotting. . . . Explaining how he would manage things so that nothing would leak out. He repeated over and over again the stories Mrs. Fishhead, Dr. Thomas, Marion and I were to recite. . . .

And then he'd boss Marion. If she wanted to be his star, she'd have to help. She must take the medicines. Do everything Dr. Thomas said. Go nowhere

and see nobody. Exercise and diet carefully. Forget everything except that he, Mark, was fighting side by side with her; and soon it would be all over and she'd be back on Broadway. He would bring out manuscripts soon, and they would plan her production. Oh, yes, he'd come out often. Every week, if he could. And phone every night. He would phone Dr. Thomas, too, and get reports; and if ever the reports were bad, he'd never call Marion any more. . . .

Thus did Mark save Marion's reason. I know he did.

I stayed two weeks more instead of one. I didn't leave until I knew Marion had begun to remember her name in lights. . . .

On the trip back, I tried to figure out what you've often tried to figure out. Whether life made any sense, or had any real justice. . . . I didn't know the straight story of Marion's honeymoon. I've never known it. But I've gathered enough, from time to time, to realize why she tried to force a miscarriage. . . . Clark had seemed urgent about Hawaii for his honeymoon, and Marion (who hadn't a jealous bone in her body) saw no reason why it wouldn't be jolly. She had always wanted to see the island, anyway. Evidently, Clark had become wild-eyed on the beach one moonlit night, and had confessed to her that he had murdered his first wife—by drowning her—and I gather he tried to do

the same thing to Marion. But the experience, and the struggle she had against him, had left her stark mad for a time. . . . There may have been more. . . . I know now that poor Clark Adams is a recognized dope addict. . . . Maybe he had already indulged back in those days. . . . One thing we all know. Mark stuck to his word. Clark Adams (after one picture he made to save the face of things and help along publicity) never was a movie star again. . . .

IX

WHEN I returned to New York in September, Arnold met me at the train. At first I was so exuberant at seeing him, that I noticed nothing. But before many minutes, I recognized a soft constraint in his manner. He didn't take me to my apartment. Direct to dinner at the Ambassador we went, where I began to tease him about his peculiar manner. Was he really mad at me for staying so long? I had missed him so. I had so much love saved up for him. . . . Had he gone and found a brunette while I was away, and didn't want to break the news?

I saw he was in no mood for kidding. We finished dinner awkwardly. I gabbled bits about Marion. . . . He told me he had just seen Roy off to Andover, and Gloria was starting at the National Park. . . .

Driving home, he put his arm around my shoulder, and gave orders for the chauffeur to cruise around the park a while. I lifted my face to his, and he kissed me very tenderly.

"Arnold, dear, what is it?"

He took my hand and squeezed it tight.

"For God's sake, Arnold. Tell me. What is it?"

"I've got unhappy news for you, precious. You've got to square your shoulders."

"I—can't think. . . ."

"It's all right, honey. I'm right with you, you know. . . . Well, I have Lucy down at your apartment. . . ."

"You have Lucy—why? What's the matter with her?"

"She's sick."

"Good Lord, you scared me. If that's all, go ahead. What sickened her?"

"She got word from Washington. . . ."

"Washington. . . . Arnold! It isn't Eddie?"

"Hold on to yourself, honey."

"Arnold—they didn't kill him?"

"Listen, girl. He died in action. A soldier's death. A hero's death. Think of that, Dora. He's been decorated too, Dora. A month ago. Think of that, child. . . ."

I felt myself going. I clutched onto his coat lapels. I felt his kisses on my face, and I heard words far away. . . .

His voice gave orders to the chauffeur. . . . Up Riverside Drive. . . . We went to an Inn far above Ossining. . . .

The next morning he drove me down to my apartment, where I faced Lucy. Lucy, biting sheets,

and trying to pull out her hair, and asking God why this should happen to her. . . .

I've been used to many shocks, but she startled me. Good heavens, the child never *loved* Eddie. She knew Eddie never loved her. She had stood in this very room and cursed him into Kingdom Come, and hoped he had cooties. . . .

I gave her spirits of ammonia, and went out to engage a quiet room for myself at the Majestic. Fun is fun. I wasn't going to nurse Lucy out of dramatics.

My annoyance with her with a sedative to my own grief over Eddie's death. I began to reason. . . . I began to realize how fortunate his end was. . . . He might have swung on a rope, or writhed in an electric chair. He had been headed right for it. . . . He might have been shot in the back by one of his gang, or been taken for a ride. . . . Yes, he was lucky. It was a break. . . . And yet, I was haunted by that pale freckled face. . . . "You and I hit it off, Dora. . . ."

Damn it!

I called up Rita, and my brother-in-law told me that she had gone to visit mama and console her. . . . I couldn't go to visit mama—because papa was still there. . . . Who the hell wanted to go visit them. . . . What had they ever done for Eddie? Or for me?

Arnold came to take me to dinner. I was quite composed. I never talked about it to him again. And he was sweet enough to understand. . . . Once, long after, he told me how often he thanked his Maker that his sons were too young to have to go. . . .

But between Marion and Eddie, I was all in. I didn't have much left. Try as I might, I couldn't be up to standard with Arnold. So one night he came to me with two tickets, and a little French girl to pack my things. I had Fernand as a personal maid from then on. . . .

Arnold and I went to Bermuda ten days later, and stayed until a few weeks before Christmas. He wanted to get back to celebrate with the children. Rest, the sun, the beach, and the air are the best beauty secrets I know. Often, night after night, we'd lie on the sand and listen to the ocean talking its sleep. . . . Dozing and not thinking, until the dawn came and blew out the stars. . . .

I came back with renewed vigor. I had so much to do. My business had gone pretty much to pot; for things don't run themselves. . . . I didn't care. I knew it was a small gold mine, and there was time enough. . . .

Arnold and I did some Christmas shopping together, and I bought presents for his four children "from Santa Claus." (Unlike Bob Briggs, my lover planned to be with me part of the time Christmas

Eve, and share a Christmas dinner on Christmas Day.) He made me promise not to make a single arrangement. I was to leave this Christmas to him.

So I indulged myself in gifts for him. A set of matched golf clubs, and a new golf bag. A new saddle made to measure for his horse. And an autographed manuscript of Beethoven which I had been tracking down for six months. . . . I bought gifts for mama, and Rita, and Ben, and all the McManus children, God bless them; for Marion, and Mrs. Fishhead and her adopted lame child, Jackie; for Dr. and Mrs. Thomas, and a remembrance for every girl working for me at my factory.

I remembered Lucy, too. She was still at my apartment, wearing black most awkwardly. So I was staying at the Majestic nearby. I didn't want to put her out until after the holidays when I felt I could ship her back to Yonkers without too many fireworks. I had returned to find Lucy a hero's widow! With a gold star in her window! And a pale wistful smile, and a note of suffering in her voice. Fate had rid her of Eddie most magnificently, and she was enjoying it to the full.

Arnold did not come to me on Christmas Eve until very late. I was pretty lonely by midnight. And then—without a package in his hand! I kissed him and held him tight. I really didn't care. He did love me.

He loved my gifts, too, and was thoroughly boy-

ish and satisfying over them. Then he told me to put on my things, and we'd go for a drive. He was not returning to his family until eight o'clock the following evening! We'd take a ride into the country first, and just snuggle close. . . .

It was the car *he* drove, and that pleased me. We went through the park, and right by the house on Fifth Avenue (that looked like a small-town Public Library) where Mrs. Thornley and the four children were probably still lingering over their lighted tree. . . .

"Long Island?" he suggested.

I nodded and smiled my smilest.

But on the way downtown, he drew up before a huge apartment house.

"I'm sorry, honey, but I want to stop in here and leave some friends of mine a little gift. Come on in, they'll be glad to meet you. We'll just stay for a drink."

"Oh, I'll wait."

"Aw, no. Come on in. You'll like them."

I unwound myself from my rug, and clambered out. Not so easily was I controlling my annoyance. Only a wife shows annoyance; she makes a specialty of it. I was furious that our Christmas Eve should be shared—but, to hell with it. . . .

We entered the apartment house. Arnold mentioned a name to the elevator boy, and we were slid up, and up, and up——

"Gosh, but they must like air and sun," I said.

"They live on the roof."

"In tents?"

He grinned. The elevator door was opening.

We got out into a small daintily decorated hallway. I faced a door. A door covered with tissue paper and red ribbons. And a card on it. . . . Arnold just waited and watched. . . . I went over and read the card. . . .

"To my dear one. Merry Christmas, Dora."

I got all chokey as I turned to him, unable to ask a question.

"Open your package, honey."

Together, we tore off the tissue, and Arnold handed me a small key. Together we went in, and Arnold turned on the lights. . . . A Christmas tree lighted at the same time. . . . I turned and put my head up against his neck, and he laughed. . . . The more I cried, the jollier he felt. Hand in hand we went over the living room. . . . Its fireplace burning real logs . . . a huge divan before it, and my priest's vestment thrown over a table in the corner. . . . A small pale-green dining room, with a long carven table large enough to seat six. . . . The entire table covered with a mirror. . . . Kitchen, shiny-tile, and a butler's pantry filled with supplies. . . . Two bedrooms, one in rose color and the other in dull blue, each with its bath and its own dressing-rooms. . . . Two maid's rooms and bath. . . .

Then, out on the roof, where all New York lay glimmering beneath us—Central Park winking wisely, and the lighted line of the rivers on either side. . . .

There, that night, and all the next day, we sat and promised things. . . . I cooked, and we ate, sitting on the floor before the fire. . . . And there, for so many, many grateful years, we lived and loved and learned. . . .

Arnold was far more tolerant of Lucy than I, and only through him did I learn to face the child with something more than bitter amusement. My lease at the San Remo ran another year. Lucy shouldered it, (evidently Eddie had left a swag of immodest means), taking as roommate, another girl from my office. Nothing could quite equal the swank of that little waif. She, with Eddie's medal (eventually) : she, a vigorous Pharisee, selling war stamps in spare time and telling people in public squares how her husband had died on the field of honor. . . . She expected a widow's pension, too. . . .

In the spring of 1919, Arnold urged me to open a swanky shop on 57th Street, where the name Dora Macy began to take on solid significance. Arnold himself found the quarters, suggested a manager, and devised the advertising scheme that followed that fall.

Once convinced of the plan, I became highly ex-

cited. I at last found use for the furniture which I had shipped from Germany to Rita's. (Remember when I bought myself everything as I shopped for Mrs. Byrne?) Long ago, when prohibition had come in, I had taken all the antique booze from Rita's to my new apartment, leaving her a case of champagne as a gift.

So the stately and magnificent furniture lifted the tone of my new establishment. . . . The tapestries, the huge hand-carven table, the huge Empire mirrors, and the porcelaines. . . . Arnold liked the idea; he had never permitted me to use Bertie's furniture in my own home, but the office seemed like paying an intelligent tribute to Bertie's memory.

My 57th Street manager was a widow of sad-eyed gentility, who had wasted a fortune playing checkers after her husband's death. A charming elderly woman named Adelaide Hopper, whom Arnold pitied. I put Lucy in as assistant manager, and once I roared loud enough about her clothes, Lucy became the vigorous spirit of the place. She imitated me in everything she could think of, and lifting herself to the heights of complicated legends. . . . She went in for spiritualism heavily, trying to get in touch with her poor crucified Eddie. (But everything has its use, and it was Lucy's wandering muses that inspired the tie-up of the occult with beauty in our advertising appeals.) She and Adelaide had something in common—they were both widows; and even-

tually Lucy tried to get messages from Adelaide's husband, too. . . . Nothing like having a hobby, children, to pass the sleepless hours. . . .

Meanwhile, I was busy on other scores. Every few weeks, I'd run out to Joliet to visit Marion (though I saw to it that it was impossible to be there when her baby was born); and I had Mark stopping in for a drink, looking as yellow as a corncob pipe, for months. Mark, I believe, had hoped the baby wouldn't live . . . but it did, and it was a little girl, and Marion called it Carol because she liked the name. In June, Marion left little Carol with her mother in Joliet, and went on a well-earned vacation up to Maine where Mark joined her spasmodically.

Marion returned to town in August. Began to study dancing and vocal (this time the teachers came to her, thank you) and live a two-fisted life all alone in a huge apartment surrounded only by a nurse, a maid, a secretary, a cook, a butler, and a chauffeur. And who could ask for more?

Mark made Clark Adams come on to New York; and Marion was seen with her husband at this place and that, having the time of their lives—let you tell it! All a part of Mark's clever publicity. Just before Marion's new show went into rehearsal, Clark was shipped to the coast, and much hallabaloo was made over his "new picture." He telephoned Marion every night, wired her flowers, and came to New York for a week-end when his picture was finished.

Meanwhile, Marion had opened—A star! Her name in lights! Grimly happy and childishly devoted to Mark. . . . After Clark's final week-end in New York, she never had to see him again. He was sent to London to play in a show there, and after that it was up to him to run his own career. He's never, to my knowledge, been able to do more than borrow money for dope, since. Much, much later, when he became obsessed with the idea that Marion had turned the world against him, he made a soft holler, and nearly got a bullet in his stomach from Mark. Marion, however, protested that it was too late for bullets, and evidently her arguments held. So an income was settled on Clark by which he still ekes out an existence. . . . (Eking is so nerve-wracking—I know. I've done it!) Paying shush money was less painful for Mark than an electric chair. . . .

It's beautiful how such things can be handled, isn't it? Of course, some of the story trickled out occasionally, but there is an odd loyalty in the theatre, and nobody talked out loud. . . .

The episode, however, left a scar. Many scars, of course. But I'm talking of my own. Not Al Capone's.

I hadn't seen Marion's baby, and she almost never spoke of it when she returned. She couldn't, without spoiling her looks. But I gathered she felt as mothers should feel, and her constant inquiries phoned to Joliet, made me feel abashed. . . .

In the following spring, (while Arnold was over in Europe with his family), we *had* to speak about the baby. Dr. Thomas came on for a visit to New York, and told us that Mrs. Fishhead was suffering from diabetes. And she wasn't going to last long. We called Mark, and he, with an air of resignation, made plans.

Dr. Thomas went back to Joliet, and adopted the little lame Jackie into his own home! (He still had no children—only the same old hoss!) Mrs. Fishhead and baby Carol came to New York. They were met by a Mrs. Trumble, Marion's nurse, and taken to a little apartment. (I should tell you where!) There they remained, with Mrs. Trumble by their side. And there, that evening, Marion visited them. Of course, it had been arranged for a Sunday when she had no performance.

I didn't go. Not for weeks did I go. It was enough to take care of Marion, and listen to her sniffing about the baby (who "was really too sweet to be Clark's"), and her reports on what the doctors had to say about Mrs. Fishhead. And they had to say a whole lot.

But one Saturday night, when Mark was in Atlantic City with a new show, Marion begged me to go up there with her. She seemed so utterly friendless—I simply couldn't send her off alone.

So I went. But all the while I was driving out there I cursed silently at the wheel. Cursed Marion,

and my idiotic sense of responsibility toward her. Cursed all the Fishheads, and all babies. . . .

When I saw Mrs. Fishhead, my heart went icy. I didn't give that woman the rest of 1920. . . .

Then, all tip-toe, and chokey and gaga, Marion dragged me in to see the infant Carol. (Isn't a baby just less than a year still an infant?) To hell with rules and regulations, Marion picked it up, and sat down with it, and talked nonsense at its tiny round face, and tucked a bottle into its mouth when it began to cry. . . . She kept telling me to "Look!", and so I looked. . . . It was amusing, the way it folded its fat fingers around the warm bottle, and jawed contentedly. . . .

"I want to show you its beauty mark—just like mine," gurgled Marion with a Simple-Simon smile. . . .

She showed me the beauty mark, just like hers. . . . I began to feel hot, but throwing open the window might hurt the tiny thing. Marion wouldn't even let me smoke.

"I'll let you hold it a minute," she offered magnanimously. . . . "No. Take it this way, clumsy. . . . Look, it's smiling!"

(It was really breaking gas, but many a smile is no more than that. . . .)

I took it from her, and my arms felt so weak I was afraid I might drop it. I looked down and it stared right back up at me. . . . It had big brown eyes

like Marion's, and a mop of black hair ravelling on the top of its head. . . .

Marion crowed. She kissed me, and she kissed the baby. Mrs. Trumble came in and objected, and Marion turned to talk to her. I tried to put one foot in front of the other, heading for a chair. . . . I stopped short, in front of a bureau mirror. . . . I looked in at the reflection of myself and that armful. . . . I stared into the mirror, and suddenly I could only see a blur. . . .

I turned quickly and put the baby down on a bed. It began to howl, and I heard Marion and Mrs. Trumble complain. . . .

I went out into the bathroom, and ran the cold water. . . . I put on my make-up again studiously, but my fingers were trembling. . . .

Fortunately, Marion herself was crying when we left, so she noticed nothing. I drove to her apartment, and we sat and talked over high-balls. . . . Marion felt she owed Mark *some* loyalty. . . . He had put so much money into this show. . . . Marion's whole existence could be charged up to him. Without him, she would never have lived through it; and neither would the baby. . . . She couldn't fail him now. . . .

We left each other wilted rags, and I drove home around four o'clock in the morning. I couldn't sleep. . . . I felt like an orange must, when it's squeezed. . . .

Two mornings later, I couldn't stand it. I got up and drove to the old charity hospital where I had once signed away a baby. The old Mother Superior had been transferred. . . . They had a different nun there, but she remembered me. . . .

In the immaculate, hang-dog simplicity of the "parlor" (spotted with statues and holy-pictures and straight-backed chairs), we talked. I might just as well have saved myself the trouble. . . . No, my baby had been adopted when it was only eight months old. . . . No, they couldn't tell me who adopted it. . . . Rules of the House. . . . Protection for both. . . . Yes, she was sure it had a nice home. . . . No, she couldn't tell me where. . . . She didn't mean to be unkind, but these things were always happening, and they had to be rigid about their regulations. . . . Why, yes, she was quite sure it was still alive. She really shouldn't tell me that, except that she felt sorry. . . .

I wrote her out a check for the good work. I asked if I could send a check to my son. . . . She said, she'd find out for me. . . . (But I never heard from her. . . .)

Out in the air, I couldn't face business. I turned the hood of my car out toward the country. I drove for hours. And returned very late. The next morning I went horse-back riding in the Park. . . . But I couldn't get my baby out of my mind. . . . He must be ten years old now. . . . What did he look

like? What sort of boy was he? Did he call them "mama and papa"? Would they ever tell him he wasn't theirs? Were they educating him? Did they live in the country or the city? Were they kind to him—or. . . .

I had to snap out of it. To hell with it. . . . I had known what I was doing. How could I have taken care of him? And what use would he have had for a mother who was just—just—just running a cold-cream business. . . .

So I pitched into my work hand over fist, and got myself nice and exhausted. I tried to keep away from Marion, without hurting her feelings. . . . I wrote to Arnold; and went to spend a week with Consuelo in Newport. . . . Chased to a lot of parties. . . .

But always my eyes had a way of seeking out—on the streets, in hotels, in restaurants—kids around ten years old, and looking at them. . . . Wondering if. . . . Silly, but I couldn't help it. . . .

Suddenly Marion came and camped on my doorstep, demanding attention. Mrs. Fishhead had to go to a hospital. . . . What was Marion to do? Where would this all end up. . . ?

That Sunday afternoon, we drove up to the apartment. . . . Mrs. Fishhead was to be carried out that night in an ambulance, and Mrs. Trumble was to remain and take care of the baby. Mark came up, shortly after, and he and Marion talked to Mrs.

Fishhead. . . . The poor woman became hysterical, and Mrs. Trumble called me to keep Carol from falling, while she attended the invalid. . . .

Mrs. Trumble had been in the midst of Carol's bath. So I gave the baby its bath, while it gurgled and mewed; but the beads of perspiration were standing out over my head and cheeks. . . . I powdered the little thing . . . the little thing. . . . I held it close and told it secrets it would never repeat. . . .

Mrs. Trumble came in, all of a bustle, insisting I had done everything wrong. . . . I went out to Marion and Mark and lit a cigarette. . . .

Mrs. Fishhead died in the hospital three weeks later. I simply wouldn't go to the funeral. Mark had arranged for Mrs. Trumble to continue taking care of the baby at the same apartment.

I arranged a vacation for myself very carefully. I decided to go upstate and see if there really were a Thousand Islands. . . . I made all the reservations. . . . But I just didn't go. I sent Lucy instead. She needed a vacation.

Often I went up with Marion to see the baby. It was a duck of a baby. . . . Marion didn't like the way Mrs. Trumble took care of it. Mrs. Trumble had old-fashioned ideas and wouldn't follow the strict rules of modern baby specialists. . . .

So Mark and Marion quarrelled about that. And since the subject was brought up, Mark expressed

his opinion on Marion's damn-fool idea of running up there so much. Why didn't she get up on a soap box and say the baby was hers? Marion got temperamental. So Mark said, go as far as she liked, but count him out, and it wouldn't take him two weeks to close the show, and the devil with her career. . . . If that was all the thanks he got. . . .

They sulked for two weeks. Marion went up less, and I went up more, and gave her reports. I loved going up. Carol was actually fond of me. She broke my necklace, pulled my hair, and ruined a perfectly swell dress. Terribly fond of me. And Mrs. Trumble hated me. . . .

So, one day, I went down to see Marion and told her I wanted to take Carol. She cried. I told her all about my own baby. And I cried. Then we talked about how devilish life was, and remembered the old days. And then we both cried. So then she asked me what would Arnold think. And I mixed us each a high-ball.

We fired Mrs. Trumble, and I took Carol down to my apartment, and fixed up one of the maid's room-and-bath for her. I got Carol all sorts of silly ridiculous things. . . . Lacey bassinettes, and a lovely carriage. . . . It was grand for her up on the roof, in the sun. The only doctor in all my life I didn't despise was the baby specialist who came to see Carol every week to guide her diet and her hours. . . . I got a nice Fraulein for the baby too.

. . . I was thrilled. I hadn't had so much fun since I swallowed my first tooth. . . .

Arnold returned lated in September.

I introduced him to the new member of the family. His eyes bulged.

"For God's sake, Dora!"

"U-huh. For God's sake."

"But you must be crazy."

"I think maybe I am."

"Everyone will think it's ours."

"That will give them something more to talk about."

He stared in at the maid's room trimmed with ducks and elephants on the wall. . . .

"Arnold, please let me keep it. I love it. You'll love it too. What does it matter whose baby it is? If it's a brat when it grows up—but I won't let it be—but if it is, I'll ship it off to boarding schools and camps and things. But Arnold, you have everything, and I have nothing. You have a family. You know how you love them, too. I have you, yes. But I have to share you. . . ."

"You'll have to share this, too. Marion will be over here half the time. . . ."

"I know. I never seem to have anything quite my own. . . . But half a loafer is better than no loafer at all. . . ."

He saw I was awfully close to tears. He put his

arms around me and kissed me, and told me how much he had missed me. . . .

We had dinner there in the apartment. And after dinner, I curled up in his lap, and he smoothed back my hair. . . . I always felt comfortable when he smoothed back my hair that way. . . .

"Dora?"

"Yes?"

"I didn't know you liked babies——"

"I hated them—until lately."

"Because you lost your own. Is that it, honey?"

"Yes—because I lost my own."

"It must be terrible to have your child die. God, I hate to think of it."

I didn't answer.

"Dora."

"Yes?"

"Did you ever think—of having another baby of your own?"

"No. It never entered my head."

We sat very quietly awhile.

"Arnold."

"Yes?"

"Do you want one?"

"No, honey. I guess not. You're all the baby I need. Besides, we have one now. . . . It's rather funny, isn't it?"

"Rather."

"I didn't expect to be a papa when I came back. . . ."

"You will let me keep it, then? It won't make a difference?"

"Nothing could make a difference. I only love you more for it. But there are times when you are something of a fool, Dora."

"I think you're nice, too."

X

So MUCH happened that is nobody's business, in the years that pattered by. Arnold and I lived in perfect accord, and he was my one outstanding concern and consideration. I loved Carol with all my heart, and I loved my business. But they could both take second place as far as Arnold was concerned.

Our life together was based on love. You may call it what you will. I know it was love. I didn't have to play games with Arnold, or "act up." I think our relationship was sustained because we could be perfectly natural with each other. Of course, I wasn't natural, as a wife is natural. I never looked haggard for more than twenty-minute stretches; I didn't worry, nor nag, nor pry, nor act as a body-guard to him. My feelings were never "hurt." Nothing phased me, nor ruffled, nor discountenanced me. Except in the privacy of my solitary hours. One advantage, of course, was that I had solitary hours, which is more than most wives enjoy. You see, I didn't *have* to face Arnold every

meal, every minute of every night and morning, of each week that passed. He came to dine with me, to sup, to theatre, to week-end because he *wanted* to—not because he had no place else to go. He was not afraid of "being late" or being held accountable. Who he saw, where he went, or what he did concerned me only inasmuch as he made it my business. In that way, every meeting was an occasion; and the journeys we took together were a successions of honeymoon. . . .

To some extent, it was one-sided; but every relationship of any sort with a man is bound to be one-sided; and if it isn't, the man is never interesting. Arnold kept unobtrusive track of me, and I had no intimacies of any sort of which he might disapprove. He, on the other hand, was foot-loose and fancy-free. And a man will be those things anyway, whether you grin or tear your hair. Though a little riot now and then does every man good.

After all, I didn't care, I wanted nothing beyond him, really. I had Carol, and Marion, and Mark, and Lucy, and Rita, and later Howard Gorham (who had come back from the war, with a leg shot to hell, and who could disapprove of my driving out to talk to him, and tell him there was much to live for with, or without, a hay-foot?). And I had my business. And Consuelo (who had become Mrs. Forthright Stumpp, and still visited Bertie's grave). Consuelo was one of my closest friends. She thought

Carol was a lamb (and knew damn well it was Arnold's child!). I visited her at French Lick or Newport, or went on an occasional yachting cruise on her magnificent little tub, from Newport up to Maine (with an automobile on land following us all the way up the coast).

I also had a new friend—of a sort. One Earl Phillips, whom I met constantly over the long period of years, with Arnold. A wealthy ingrained bachelor, slightly older than Arnold, who still went to Yale Class Dinners, and still pranced about as if he were only thirty. Earl was a delightfully stupid soul, who thought me the greatest little masterpiece God had achieved. He made a fortunate substitute whenever I needed a top-hat escort. (Earl was born for a top-hat.) And Arnold could find practically no objections to my being seen with Earl.

Earl had a way of repeating every third or fourth word he spoke. He took an enormously long time to say anything, and when it was said it really didn't amount to much. Whenever he heard a good story, he'd laugh himself ruddy, and repeat that same story for the next three weeks at any and all dinner parties. Right to your face, he'd hand you back your joke and expect you to double up like a gate-leg table. He came from a family that was filthy with ancestors, but probably the blood had weakened a bit when it got as far as Earl. Arnold told me how Earl had been engaged in his youth to some jane

too good for the social register. Earl spent a night with some actress in the "Black Crook," and probably spent it lavishly. So the jane who was too good for the social register had up and taken poison, when she heard the news. Hence, Earl remained single the rest of his days (I don't know about the nights), and nobody seemed to care. . . . But Earl was a precious dear; everyone liked him and wanted him around. Chubby, genial, a true aristocrat; he fostered art, sponsored young talent, and ran an enormously successful gallery in a large metropolis west of New York and east of Chicago. Maybe that's what made him so very-wot-wot and oh-quite-quite . . .

My roof-apartment was the basis for many a gay set-up. Dinner parties, which Arnold planned most carefully, and to which he brought people whose names you're too young to know. (I could be hung for what I don't tell.) Dances out on our roof. Cocktail hours. Our own motion pictures shows. A gymnasium and play-room (for us, not for Carol) built on as an extension, to which we could have hired entertainers to amuse or shock us or both, depending on our mood. . . .

Anyway, you get the idea! We'd go on occasional trip, when we weren't whooping it up at my apartment, or playing quiet serene spell at being Mr.-and-Mrs.-with-a-baby-all-our-own. And gee, Carol was cute. She learned to call Arnold "Big boy" as a

regular thing. She called me Dora, which was as it should be. . . .

Then one night, I made a new friend. Arnold and I were at the opening of a play. And during the intermission, we ran into his oldest and favorite son, Roy (who was then about nineteen). Roy had sneaked up from Harvard for a football game, and was taking a hot-cha-cha little flapper, on the quiet, to the show.

Well, Roy got all fussed, so Arnold and Roy went into the smoking room, and did the man-to-man stuff. Leaving me talking to the little flapper (who was a nice little tart of a fine family), and introducing her to everyone that happened to spot me. Later, Arnold and Roy swaggered over to us, and Roy was introduced to "Miss Macy." Roy behaved remarkably well. I wanted to laugh and felt I shouldn't. Poor Roy had evidently tried so hard to be like his pop. Even down to the derby and the cane, and the swagger. Imitated the same hail-fellow-well-met manner . . . only he lacked the shy self-consciousness in Arnold's eyes. There was nothing shy or self-conscious about Roy.

Later, Arnold and I took Roy and the girl friend to a supper. Oh, very informal, of course. At which the girl-friend trimmed her lips every ten minutes, and drank four highballs to our every one. And Roy's embarrassment was too delicious . . .

Home, Arnold and I discussed the matter. His

family were neither blind, deaf nor dumb. . . . One never wanted to be offensive, of course (oh, didn't one?) . . . But Roy was growing up, and there was no use playing blindman's buff with your own son. It was good for him to know things. He would appreciate how unusual I was. . . . It would give him a standard. . . .

After that, I gave Roy a standard for several years. Just a little fairy godmother. He could tell me all his pranks, haul in his girls for me to look over, or stop in for a drink with his gang. Some big boy, was Roy. Quite impressed that he should be permitted to pal around. Mighty nice kid, too. I was fond of him. He treated me as if I were some precious, delicate piece of unbreakable porcelain. . . . It amazed him that I knew so much about him and his family. . . . Often we'd sit and discuss (very seriously and earnestly) the moods, habits and whims of Hubbard, Dick and Gloria. . . . Once he described Gloria's coming-out party, and I listened, amused—wondering why boys didn't have a going-in party. . . .

As time went on, Roy joined in on many parties, and occasional trips which Arnold and I took with Consuelo's outfit. . . .

I lost one friend, around that time, too—if anybody could call Ethel Rogers a friend. She came east one Fall, and set herself up magnificently in a peculiar little occupation. She of the withering poise,

had succeeded, by riding the bumps a bit too dizzy, in losing all her sex-appeal. She became a very nervous, frazzled, hard-shelled female, with an unrequited passion burning in her lazy eyes, and in her chilly thin fingers. No longer was she a famed beauty; her name merely recalled starry, passé days. Ethel could and did still get men, but they were hardly worth the effort. She still was lousy with vermine coats and her arms were still handcuffed with sparkles enough to buy the Post Office. But her real source of income (known only to the choice inner circle where rode the five hundred) was everybody's business—under cover. Blackmail is not as nice a word as settlement. And believe me Ethel was some little settlement worker. . . .

Quick-witted as I am on most ocasions, it had not seeped through my naive mind that Ethel was playing this little game of chance, until Mrs. Thornley had received several phone calls which troubled her sufficiently to speak to Arnold about it. Arnold repeated the startling story to me, and still I didn't dream. When Mrs. Thornley again received a phone call, she directed the feminine voice to go see her lawyer.

So arrangements were made, and Ethel showed up at the office of Mrs. Thornley's lawyer; who, even with laughing gas, could not have enjoyed Ethel's facts, dates and proofs. All relative, of course.

Whereupon both the lawyer and Arnold raised an eyebrow at me. I told them to forget Ethel. I would attend to her.

So, I attended to her (with Marion by my side as a witness), one evening, by ringing the door of her apartment. I had a nice little pearl pistol in my muff, and greeted Ethel with a neat graze on the right arm. Which proved I meant business. On the threat of carrying it even a little farther, I got from Ethel the only two items for possible worry, and told her where she got off. And just to assure her of my ability, I took a shot at the lowest crystal of her chandelier and split it to smitherings. . . . After all, Arnold hadn't taught me to hunt for nothing.

Merely a minor incident in a busy and fulsome winter! I only mention it to explain why Ethel and I were not on speaking terms for such a long time. I might add that neither Arnold nor his aloof statue with the fearless eyes, was ever annoyed again by Ethel's drawl. . . . (Mark had a different way of attending to her later. He paid her money, gave her a Mickey Finn; took back the money and the other little accoutrements. It was like Mark, however, to send her flowers the next day when she was laid up.)

Many's the high brow that knitted over Ethel, however, and why she was ever obliged to put herself out of luxurious misery is more than I can figure out. (It was nearly 1924 when she at last disfigured

her half-opened lips with carbolic acid. For reasons explained before.)

Some considerable time before Ethel's unpleasant end, however, I went through a few emotional acrobatics myself. . . . I cannot mention the dates nor circumstances in deference to the good old red-white-and-blue, and the honeysuckle-around-the-old-homestead. . . .

Be it understood, though, that during a certain and well-advertised political and financial upheaval (which you have probably forgotten, as most nice Americans forget the messy little misunderstandings of their home teams) Arnold faced a complete downfall. I assure you that if the poor man was involved it was only to keep the others from doing worse. That's my story, and I'll stick to it.

At any rate, here on the right you see Exhibit A; a multi-millionaire, one of the vertebrae of the nation, unable to raise one American dollar in cold cash, and a bit disinclined to show his face in the open or speak out loud. You say that's utterly impossible. But you'll live and learn. That was Arnold —and it all happened in a few days (after gaining momentum for several years). On the left, please note Exhibit B—a well-known business woman whose main job was to take the multi-millionaire's difficulties to heart, like the prize slob she was. That was Dora Macy.

Maybe I wasn't distracted. I had shown one

woman how well I could aim when she attempted to disturb my lover's harmless occupations. But how could I be expected to go down and shoot up Washington? Yet, something had to be done so that Arnold could make an immediate graceful gesture. There is one well-known and rather over-used method of yawning politely into the face of investigators. That is going abroad, speedily and with malice aforethought (if possible, with your Isotta Fraschini shipped along with you).

Within seven days, I had unloaded all my jewelry, most of my stocks and bonds (except those held against loans), and still Arnold and I regarded each other blankly and pennilessly. Furthermore, Arnold was sick. So sick that every time the telephone rang he took aspirin. We had three alternatives. Either my man took his medicine (which would be merely becoming a white-livered quitter and dragging others in with him). Or we went into hiding (and where in the name of freedom, *can* you go into hiding?). Or else we became insulted and unconcerned and did the grand thing in the grand manner (which, after all, takes money as well as guts). (Fourthly, and not to be uttered, we could simply say "Please pass the poison.")

By three o'clock one afternoon, I got so nervous over Arnold's dull stare into the fire, that I bundled into my nicest clothes, and decided to take matters into my own uncalloused hands.

I hied me forth to do a little blackmailing on my own. The only blackmail I've ever been guilty of.

A taxi-cab took me to the Fifth Avenue office of the Ross Travel Agency. I went in and asked for Charles Needham Wentworth Ross. They regretted that C. N. W. Ross was not in. They telephoned their downtown office. C. N. W. Ross was there. Did I wish to speak to him? I asked how long would he be there, and they said the rest of the day.

Another taxi-cab took me to the downtown office of the Ross Travel Agency—somewhere around the Custom House.

In I went and asked for Charles Needham Wentworth Ross. Yes, he was there. So I sent in my card, after writing on the back of it. Just a few trifling words.

Three minutes later I was ushered into the private office of Charles Needham Wentworth Ross. I didn't look at him until his elderly, mannerly, and utterly hapless secretary closed the door and left us to fight it out in peace.

He was standing by his glass-top desk, his face chalky white, and his pale blue eyes blinking behind tortoise-shelled glasses. I'm sure I stunned him. But he returned the compliment. I knew this was Needy —yet I couldn't tie him up with my wispy memories. . . .

"It was nice of you to see me right away," I complimented him, quietly.

"What do you want?" he cannoned at me.

That made it all right. I laughed, and went over to settle myself in the stenographer's chair.

"Thanks for coming right to the point. Sit down. I'm not going to bite you."

But Needy remained on his feet.

"I'm in trouble," I said, looking for no reason at the wedding ring he wore. "If I weren't in desperate trouble, I'd never be here. I've never asked you or yours for anything. . . ."

"What do you want? Money? I haven't any. I'm not rich. For God's sake, leave me alone. I haven't got anything. You don't know how I . . ."

"I don't want to know! I have no intention of disturbing you. I merely want two tickets, and the finest suite that can be had, on the next steamer to Europe. I don't care where it lands, so long as it sails tomorrow. That's what I want. That and nothing else."

He sucked his under lip, and sat down slowly.

I closed my eyes. He made me feel dirty and sick and smothered. A funny wriggling worm for lips, and the chin and eyes of a weakling. . . . Good God in Heaven, how had I ever wasted love on him? Suffered so . . . because of *him!* Given him the first sweetness and tenderness. . . .

"Is that all?" There was a note of terror in his voice.

"No. I want a passport in twenty-four hours. It

can be done . . . you telephone to Washington. . . . You must know how it's done. I've got to have it."

His nose twitched, and he groped for his handkerchief. "Yes, I can do that. You'll have to go over to the Custom House. I'll phone Mr. Ives over there to expect you. He'll handle it. . . . But how do I know you won't . . .?"

"There isn't any way. You'll have to take my word for it. It won't get you into any difficulties. And I'll never come near you again!"

(Which was a lie, but how could I guess that?)

"But——"

"You might just as well not waste any time. You're going to do it, and you may as well get it over with. I'll go have my passport pictures taken. And then I'll see Mr. Ives at the Custom House. By then, you will have the reservations?"

I was standing by his desk, gazing right at him. (It's always best to sit when the man is standing, and rise when he sits!)

"Reservations for two?"

"Yes. Suite for one, and adjoining stateroom."

"I don't know if there is any to be had."

"Oh, you'll find them."

"You'll be back in an hour or so?"

"You can count on it."

"All right."

Nearly three hours of irritating routine passed

before I returned to Needy's office, however. At least, I knew I'd have a passport by noon next day. They were going to send it up to me. Nice man, Mr. Ives. . . . Fortunately Arnold had his passport.

But I was a bit panicky. I wondered if Needy were going to duck me some way.

The secretary ushered me into the office instantaneously, and there sat Needy, quite businesslike and unhappy.

"Everything is attended to, Miss Macy. I'm mighty glad I was able to accommodate you . . ."

The secretary closed the door.

I picked up the tickets he had tossed on the table, and studied them thoroughly.

"Thank you," I said, and slipped them into my purse. "Couldn't ask for better."

I drew up the collar of my coat.

"You've changed a lot, Dora."

"Yes. I guess I have."

"You despise me, don't you?"

"I never even think of you."

"But you thought of coming to me."

"I wanted steamer tickets, and couldn't buy them. Later—when I return—I'll send you a check for them. I'm obliged in the meantime."

"I'm glad it's over."

"What do you mean?"

"I knew . . . some day . . . that, well, we'd meet . . ."

I frowned. I could suddenly see how the thought had been worrying him . . . probably for years . . . seeing my name on my shop—in advertisements. . . . I could see him frantic for fear he might run into me. . . .

I couldn't help smiling. . . .

"I'm glad it's over. I'm sorry I acted the way I did, Dora. You see, I was so startled. . . . I know you mean what you said. . . . I know you're on the level. . . ."

"Aren't we broad-minded?" I laughed.

My eyes lighted on a silver-framed picture, and I picked it up.

"Is it your wife—and your children?"

"Yes."

"Umm. Does she call you 'Needy'?"

"No. No, she doesn't."

"I bet the children don't either!" I put the silver frame down carefully, and again bundled up my collar.

He held out his hand; but in turning I wouldn't see it. I merely walked out of his office, through the outer maze, and into the street.

Another taxi-cab drove mercilessly slow through the traffic, and ran me round the park before I landed home.

Arnold was still staring into the fire. I went over

and laid the tickets on his lap. He picked them up and read them like a man must read a pardon.

"But Dora, where——?"

"Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies."

He got to his feet and took me by the shoulders.

"Dora, I want to know."

"I mortgaged the old homestead."

"If you don't tell me——"

"You'll have to tell other things to other people and it won't be pleasant!" I flared. "I'm still the same sweet child, unsullied and untouched, if that's what's bothering you. If you don't believe it, tear the damn things up and run me a good hot bath. If you do believe it, you'd better start packing and arranging things. And so had I. Because I'm going right along with you, to see you don't bust the bank on the boat."

"You'll tell me who to send the check to, later?"

"Oh, send it to the Orphan's Home."

"But one thing, Dora . . . Did you get these from a man?"

"No." I looked right back at him.

"You're some little side-kick, Dora. You're a brick. . . ."

"We, at the home office, agree with you."

Arnold and I sailed the following midnight. Where, for many months, we trailed blissfully around, skiing in Switzerland, playing for healthy

stakes at Monte Carlo, swimming at Cannes, meeting occasional friends in Paris (where I firmly kept myself from trying to hunt up Eddie's grave, because what good would that do either me or Eddie?) ; idling in Venice, and wearing Jaegers under the bleary skies of London.

Eventually, like a gentleman, Arnold went home. Commenting gravely on prosperity, and foreign relationship; having his picture taken; and a special dispensation from the custom officials to greet him.

A few weeks later, I followed, by route of Canada, where I managed to open a branch outlet for my pretties before I took train to New York.

The excitement was over. Most everyone had forgotten. And those who remembered bought nice big blocks of stock, and let it go at that.

Only two days did I have with Arnold (once more his bright chipper self) before he and his family went off for a summer sunning.

Fortunately, therefore, I was alone in town, when I read the unbelievable story in the newspapers about Charles Ross.

Needy was in the death-house in Sing-Sing! For murdering his wife!

I read the account so many times I could recite it in my sleep. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't understand. . . . Needy—that weakling—that harmless fish—with the pale blue eyes, behind tortoise-shell glasses, and that little worm of a mouth. . . . How

could he have murder in him? What in heaven's name had the wife done to prompt murder? . . . He had strangled her. . . . He had been drunk, but not drunk enough to escape the electric chair, evidently. . . .

No matter how much I saw of Earl Phillips, or Marion, or Consuello; no matter how entertaining little Carol was with the added wisdom she had acquired since I had seen her; no matter how many alanol I took at night—I could not get Needy out of my mind. . . .

How could all that have happened while I was away? Why the hell should I care? Why was I concerned? How could it possibly matter. . . .

But it did matter. I can't explain it. It mattered so much that I went up to Ossining and tried to see Needy. It took a Sixth Avenue wardrobe, a black wig, a carefully planned name, and a story to go with it, before I dared. I even borrowed Marion's car, and parked it several miles outside of Ossining. After all, I was not unknown to reporters. . . . I didn't want a sensational splash in the papers. Arnold would never have permitted me to go, . . .

At first Needy refused to see me, but I wrote him a note (which was duly supervised) explaining that I only wanted to help. . . .

Needy was permitted to talk to me through a wire screen. I couldn't think of much to say. . . .

It seemed so terrible. . . . I asked him if there were anything he would like. He said some books.

I went up again, and brought him books. He talked a little then. . . . Just assuring me there was no hope. . . . Everyone had tried. . . . His father was still trying. . . . There was no use. And he didn't care. He'd just as soon die. He couldn't face his kids again, knowing they knew. . . .

He cried like a child. He was awfully thin and stiff, and his face looked so frightful with that crosswork of steel between us. . . .

I went up once more—just two days before he was to be electrocuted. (It was a dreadful risk. Reporters followed me in a car for miles afterwards; and I can thank the fact that Mark could afford to give Marion eight cylinders, that I ever shook them off. Just the same, it was worth it—somehow. . . .)

Needy was so grateful to see me—wig and all.

His fingers touched mine. . . . He hardly spoke —just stared out at me. . . .

Right close up to the steelwork I went.

"You'll keep a stiff upper lip, Needy?"

He nodded.

"I'll be thinking of you, Needy. You think of me."

He nodded and his fingers came closer. . . .

"Dora, I just want you to know . . . I want you to understand about things between us. I was just a

kid. . . . I don't think if it hadn't been for Dad—that I'd ever acted like such a cad. . . ."

"I don't think you would, Needy."

"He meant the best. He thought he was doing right."

"I suppose he did, Needy. It doesn't matter."

"I wish I had it to live over again—that's all."

"Needy!"

"What is it, Dora?"

"You know—we had a son. A boy, Needy."

"Dora!—Dad told me you—you got rid of it——"

I kept my mouth shut. . . .

"Dora . . . Where is he? Tell me about it."

"I don't know, Needy. . . ."

"What do you mean? Is he alive?"

"I really don't know, Needy. I wished to hell I did. Somebody—somebody adopted it. . . . I once tried to find it, not so long ago. . . . I couldn't."

I turned and listened to the sounds of the death-house. I didn't want to watch him. . . .

"Dora . . . Dora . . ."

"Yes?"

"Will you—kiss me—just goodbye——?"

I could only feel the coldness of steel mesh pressed against my face. . . .

The day of Needy's execution, I stayed at Marion's. She was having her portrait done by the

same artist Arnold had commissioned twice to paint me. . . . (One daub of me is in my salon, and the other is in Arnold's hunting lodge up on an island off Maine. Or at least it was. I don't know where it is now. . . .) She and I had dinner in her apartment, but I couldn't eat. I couldn't drink. And I couldn't talk. Marion thought Arnold and I had tiffed, and she was very kind and full of advice. . . .

When she went to the theatre, I tried to take a walk. Then I went home. I phoned Earl around eleven, and asked him to take me somewhere. We went to a night-club, and didn't get home until nearly four. Even then I couldn't sleep. . . . I'd picture Needy. . . . I'd feel the cold steelwork on my cheeks. . . . I'd wonder where our kid was . . . and what he looked like at the age of thirteen.

I fell asleep out on the roof in a deck-chair. . . . Woke up feeling like hell. . . . There was a to-do in the apartment, thank God! I could stand a little excitement right about then. Carol was screaming and crying with pain. . . . Two days later she was operated on for mastoids, and that gave me plenty to do. Both me and Marion (who sang off key one whole performance and took it out on Mark. . . .)

Arnold came to town the following week-end, and I blamed all my pallor on Carol. But Arnold had something on his mind. As usual, he came right to the point.

"Dora. Why don't you tell me, without my asking?"

"What?"

"You know damn well—what!"

"It must have slipped my mind."

"Why have you been trailing out to Sing-Sing? A swell place for you to be seen. . . ."

"I wasn't seen—really. Do you have me tracked everywhere I go?"

"It's a good thing, I do. I want to know about it."

"Don't look at me like that. I'm awfully tired. Awfully tired, Arnold."

"Well, when you're rested, I'll come back. Meanwhile, if you wish, you can write it to me."

"Othello—in evening clothes!"

"I'm serious."

"I've never kept anything from you. I don't do anything you can't trace to your heart's content. Surely you've found that out!"

"I know, Dora. But this——"

"I just don't like to talk about it. . . . Well, there was a man up there. Named Ross. He was—electrocuted last week. He was—the boy back in Philadelphia. . . ."

"But why did you go up there? You haven't been seeing him?"

"No."

"Well, then, what is it to you?"

"Nothing, but a corpse, now. He hasn't been anything to me—not since I was sixteen. . . . You can make sure of that. There are plenty of ways. . . ."

"Then, Dora, *please* why did you . . .?"

"I don't know. Please, Arnold. Why do women do anything? God, let me be human sometimes! After all, Arnold, I had a child by him once—a son, Arnold. . . ."

"But it died!"

"Yes! Yes! Yes! For Christ's sake, let me alone with your questions. Get the Burns private detectives and put them on eight hour shifts. I'll keep them entertained. But you won't learn one thing I don't tell you—or wouldn't tell you, if I had to. But leave me alone. If you don't trust me by now, go to hell, and stay there!"

Whereupon Dora made an exit into her bedroom, and locked the door.

Nor did she listen to one word that was called outside, for she was very unsightly, face down on her bed, crying like an alley-cat—loud and lusty!

When I got up the next morning, all blooey-eyed and full of headaches, no Arnold was around to plead forgiveness.

I went up to the hospital to see little Carol; and then I sent for one of my adepts, and had a massage and facial and a shampoo at home. Not until after

five, did Arnold call, and then I told the maid to say I was napping.

At six, Arnold jaggled the key in the lock, and walked into my living room. I wasn't expecting him at all, but I certainly was dressed to expect somebody.

"Get out of that flippery," he leaned over and kissed me full on the lips, "and put on a suit, or some tweeds or something useful. We're going out into the country."

"Not without food, we're not."

"Have you dinner ready?"

"Only for myself."

"Well, we'll go to Automat first, I suppose. Only hurry. I've got a surprise for you."

"Arnold—you couldn't surprise me. I know you as well as I know the Lord's prayer—and I like you a lot better."

But Arnold did surprise me. With a charming warm-hearted little house, overlooking its own private lake—up around the Croton district. A summer place, where I could rest and relax, and where Carol could have all the advantages a city baby misses. For all that I raved over it, Arnold insisted it wasn't finished. He hadn't intended to give it to me until he had a couple to manage it, a dock built on the lake, and a tiny boat house. . . . It was all to show me how fully he appreciated my help with the

European trip. . . . He owed me so much; so much more than the jewelry and bonds I had thrown into the pool. . . . He owed me the kind of things nobody can really pay up. . . . Etc., etc. Sweet, sweet speeches. . . .

Well, really, nobody can be mad after that. It stands to reason. We spent several days there together, poking around and discovering new delights on the place. . . .

As soon as Carol was out of the hospital I brought her up there with her nurse. . . . Not until long into October did we trail back to New York, and then Arnold and I would go up for week-ends, all by ourselves, building fires, and listening to the wind tell it to the marines, while we were snuggled in warm blankets. . . .

The entire year and a half that followed was too blissful to have lasted. I should have known that. But I felt so secure in Arnold's love; so bound to him by all the glorious chaos of those eight years devoted to each other. . . .

The volcano burst right at the *allegro con furioso.*

My business was a steady, undeniable success, with an income not to be sneezed at. I could support myself, and anyone I cared to take on, more than comfortably with the Dora Macy Beautifiers. Carol was almost seven, going to school like a good little minx, and attending dancing classes three afternoons a week (at Marion's insistence!)

The main hub of my interests was Roy and Earl Phillips, and Consuelo, and Marion. . . . (And Rita, who had ignored me in shocked silence for years, and was just getting to the point where she and Ben boasted about having me in the family.) Lucy, my sister-in-law, had married unusually well, considering; but still carried on at 57th Street.

Meanwhile, I had reached the classic age of thirty-two. But, when I was twenty-four, I was exceedingly pretty, and I had stayed that way. (One of the things a wife seldom does; she is so busy living other people's lives for them, she hasn't a cent to spend on herself, and then uses her bedroom door as a wailing wall.) But it was part of my job. Just as necessary to spend hours out of doors, to exercise and diet, rest and nap, and let nothing faze me; as it was to take an inventory of my business at the end of each fiscal year, or to keep Arnold from thinking too much about himself and too little about how amusing life is. . . . .

Then came the shot that was heard round the world.

Picture me superbly gowned, waiting for Arnold to come to dinner in my apartment. The clock ticked around to eight-thirty, and no Arnold appeared. Tardiness on his part never ruffled me as far as the naked eye could see. So I ate my meal with a book. Nine-thirty struck, and I became restless. . . . I wrote a few letters, but my mind wasn't on a single

word I scratched. Eleven, and I felt surely the world had come to an end. It had, but I didn't know it.

Now, Arnold had forgotten engagements with me more than once. Often without an explanation the night through. Of course, everything was so easily understood eventually, etc., etc. But I'm a psychic little devil, and I felt absurdly unable to sit in one place for two consecutive minutes. I suppose the proletariat would call it a foreboding. . . .

Hence, when the telephone rang just before midnight, I answered it with my heart beating like a drum in a collegiate orchestra. . . .

Consuelo spoke. Guardedly. Asked me if I had a good stiff drink nearby, and a chair handy. Then, after considerable heming and haw-hawing, she gave me the news. . . .

Mrs. Thornley had died at four o'clock that afternoon!

I must have hung up. Consuelo called me back three minutes later, and asked if I'd like her to run over. . . . I thanked her and said no.

I sat beside the phone. My mind had St. Vitus dance.

Fully an hour later, Roy phoned me. The poor kid's voice was pink and ravelled. . . . He told me how it had happened. Mrs. Thornley had climbed up the sliding ladder in the huge library to get a book. (Good God, the woman had forty slaves to climb ladders and get her books!) . . . She had

fallen and had evidently hit her head on the mantel. . . . The edge of her chiffon skirt had caught fire. . . .

It was easier talking to Roy. That was somebody feeling worse than myself; somebody to comfort. . . . I asked him where he was, and he said, at home. On Fifth Avenue? No, up in Tarrytown. . . . Naturally *everybody* was there. . . . That was the poor kid's way of telling me, without mentioning Arnold's name. . . .

I didn't sleep all night. I never even undressed until late the next morning. . . . It seemed impossible that Mrs. Thornley should die. Other people died. . . . I expected to die, and frequently wondered how. . . . Often, I woke in cold terror for fear Arnold might die. . . . For months, when she was little, I had bent over to hear if Carol were really breathing, so frightened was I that she might die. . . . Eddie had died, and Bertie had died, and Ethel Rogers had died. . . . But Mrs. Thornley had seemed a fixture. . . . It was an accepted fact that Arnold's wife would go on forever, somehow.

But she didn't. She had died. She was up in Tarrytown now, and everyone was weeping, and running around. . . . Now the cool and aloof statue, with the fearless grey eyes and the voice so calm and untroubled, was no more! Somebody would fold her hands for her sweetly. . . . A wonderful woman, Mrs. Thornley. An aristocrat to the tip of her long

thin nose, and the last hair of her gleaming white coiffure. . . . God, but she had played the game well. Gracious and charming and unperturbed. A goddess of a mother, a leader of society, a wise and silent ruler of all she surveyed—and how completely she refused to survey what was not to be recognized! Yet she must have thought about me. . . . She knew about me. . . . Did she ever question anyone about me. . . . Had she ever seen me? Did she know that even Roy frequented my home and had learned to admire and cherish me? Had she heard about little Carol, and had she believed in her heart that Arnold was really her father. . . . Poor soul. . . . Poor supreme and unapproachable queen.

And Arnold! How did he feel? And what would he do? He must be dreadfully cut up. He didn't love her. Perhaps he never knew until his wedding night that the lady wore long white kid gloves. . . . But Arnold was devoted to her, always. Partly for what she represented. Partly because of the children, and their enormous respect and deference to their mother. . . . Partly because the world at large paid tribute . . . and because she had put a halo on her own head with quiet dignity. . . .

Earl Phillips telephoned me the next day at noon. We lunched together at my apartment. He had a message for me. I wrote him a note to bring to Arnold. . . .

For nearly eight days, I stayed to myself. . . . I

thought it best not to be seen anywhere. . . . Marion came over several times. Consuelo came in to tea one afternoon, and was horribly irritating in her too personal musings on what the future would be. . . . But she meant no harm. I think Consuelo must have been the first to start the recent craze for frankness. Only with her, frankness was truly ingenuous; candor was her only religion.

The next day, she went to the funeral. So did Earl Phillips. I stayed at home and read. I did so read!

Three days after the ceremony, the will was published. It was a magnificent will. Leaving each child a million in his own name (even Gloria too); remembering charities, the boys' university, faithful servants, etc., etc., etc. . . . I read it in the paper, as you probably did, and wondered if it were all there.

The following Friday, Earl dropped in for luncheon, the strained mask of necessary sorrow all shaved off his chubby, good-natured face. He brought me flowers, patted my hands whenever the impulse struck him, and remarked I was looking peeked (for which I could cheerfully have put a tack on his chair). The purpose of his call came just as he was leaving.

"I imagine you're going to Croton for a little rest this week-end?"

"Should I?"

"I think it's best. You might be up there tomorrow, you know. . . ."

"I see. Well, see you Monday perhaps, Earl?"

"By all means. Take good care of yourself, Dora."

"I'll try."

The next morning I motored up to Croton. I left about six a. m., while men in rubber boots were hosing the streets. Up there, I ordered flowers and food; shook the little house into lively splendor, and prepared myself.

Arnold arrived close to midnight.

When a very prominant man becomes the widower of a very important wife, there are many things to be considered.

At first, Arnold was strained—almost as if he remembered he had a conscience. Later, he seemed to remember he needed me. That I meant the whole world to him, and had meant it for nearly eight years. His ardor reflamed; his need for me seemed too urgent to satisfy. . . .

With all my soul I loved him. Nothing for nearly three weeks was on my mind except Arnold. He was, at last—utterly and completely—my man.

We realized we were apt to make fools of ourselves, and expose others to needless vulgarity. We talked it all over carefully, and decided we must recognize the appearances of the situation.

The parting week-end between myself and Arnold, before I went abroad with Consuelo, is the most glorious memory I have. And after all, memories are about the most we get out of life.

Consuelo was sailing alone. To get a divorce in Paris. She was in just the unemotional, pragmatic frame of mind that I needed most in a companion. And I was one person she could be herself with, and not count the cost.

So we sat on the deck together, as far away from others as we could get; let the wind blow through our brains, and the sun beat down on our tired lips. We didn't bother to dress; we didn't mingle with anyone, nor attend any of the whoopee on board. We just let the sun come up and go down, and watched uniformed adolescents pin little flags onto a map. . . . I was so terribly, quietly happy. Arnold was to join me in Europe six or seven months later. . . . Probably he wouldn't wait that long.

After a few weeks in Paris, Consuelo opened a fine old house on the Left Bank which belonged to Earl Phillips, and which he loaned her for the season. There, we began seeing and meeting people. Consuelo spoke perfect French, and knew the Parisian temperament. It was a pleasant and only mildly exciting life. The divorce routine kept Consuelo busy, while I occupied myself by opening my shop on the Rue de l'Opera. . . .

Occasionally, we journeyed down to Chartres, to

little towns in Provence, to Juan les Pins; and to Brussels, where Consuelo had an antique uncle. Later, Consuelo's husband joined us to do his share graciously about the divorce, and we had several dinner parties with him.

Constantly I wrote to Arnold, and he to me. Lovely letters, which I wish I had. But Arnold and I never kept letters. It wasn't safe. At last, I received word that Arnold was planning to come over. He hoped to arrive in November. I was not to meet him. He would wire me where to go, and when we should join each other.

Out I sallied and did considerable shopping. I never felt younger or happier; or more full of plans, and hopes. . . .

November came, and I waited breathlessly. I received a cable that the trip had to be postponed. Even then, I didn't cry.

Earl Phillips, by mere chance, showed up in Paris around that time. We did the gay things together in a choice way. He dragged me to art galleries, and introduced me to many people worthwhile in the world of art. Quite completely and simultaneously he thrilled and bored me. He left, after a month, and Consuelo sailed just before Christmas.

So I was alone in Paris for Christmas, with only a long letter of explanation from Arnold. . . . Quite alone, for all that I knew so many people.

After New Year's I received more letters from

Arnold—devoted, and ardent and filled with love and regret. It looked as if his trip were impossible for some time. Eventually, he couldn't stand it, and ordered me home.

I needed no second suggestion. I sailed three days later, and went directly to my apartment, where he was waiting for me quite as eager as I. . . .

But something had happened to Arnold. It didn't take me many months to realize. He was my old lover—but oh, so different. It was as if Mrs. Thornley had willed him her remoteness. . . . I couldn't make it out. I tried my damndest to investigate. But there seemed to be nothing—nothing I could put my finger on.

I tried to laugh it off. But my heart was getting blue around the edges, and I suffered constantly from icy feet—even through the hot summer. . . . Always I was on guard. A twenty-four hour watch. So that I wouldn't be asleep at the switch, when the signal was flashed. . . .

Then, on an evening in October, Arnold phoned me and called off a dinner engagement.

"I can't make it tonight, Dora. Sorry. But I can't make it. I'll explain to you, later."

That's all. Just—I can't make it. . . .

For ten solid days, he couldn't make it. We talked over the phone, but I never laid my eyes on him. I knew he was out in Tarrytown, that was all. And

strangely enough, Roy never called me up or dropped in to talk. . . .

The night Arnold finally came (nearly midnight when he turned the lock), I knew instantly, that what the saddists say is true—every road has a turning.

A stranger. Stern and sorrowful, but thoroughly determined.

He kissed me tenderly and held me close.

"You're one of the finest women in the world, Dora."

"And one of the most neglected!"

He took off his things, and I mixed him his favorite, taking my time as I measured and stirred. . . . He was sitting on the divan, smoking a cigar, when I brought it to him. I had one myself, and I touched his glass, and lifted mine upward;

"We'll toast it, whatever it is."

"You're a game sport, Dora."

"No. A fatalist."

I drank gratefully. We sat in silence until I couldn't bear it.

"This must be the death of something, Arnold. For heaven's sake, tell me what to mourn. It's the death of our love together. Isn't that it?"

"Dora, you must understand. . . ."

"I certainly must. But please omit flowers! Do you mind telling me who cut me out?"

He got to his feet, and began marathoning the

length of my good Sarook rug. It hurt so to watch him, but I couldn't keep my eyes off his worried face, and the shoulders that shouldn't sag. . . .

Eventually he wound up by the mantel, where he leaned on his elbow and gazed into the fire.

"Dora, I'm going to get married."

"Married, Arnold?"

"Yes. I think maybe I'm a fool. But that's the way things are, you see. Dora, I wish you could understand. . . . This is the only time I've felt it difficult to talk to you. . . ."

"You—really—shouldn't. . . . We always said we'd never—never hold each other. . . ."

He looked at me, and his eyes grew dim. He came over suddenly and sat beside me, holding my hands and staring down at them.

"Dora, you've been everything to me. You've given me everything. But I've given you everything haven't I? You're too good for me, really. . . ."

"Don't say that. That means—you don't love me any more."

"I do. That's the damndest part of it. I love you dearly—preciously. . . . Oh, it's so hard to explain. . . ."

(So is everything else that doesn't make sense!)

"Go on, Arnold. Tell me, who is it? Is it someone you met while I was abroad?"

"No."

I stared at his hair, as he bent over. . . . Who, that he knew. . . . Who? I could think of no one. . . . Somebody of his own social level, of course. . . . That was it. . . . A marriage of convenience.

He lifted his face suddenly, and talked fast and heatedly.

"It's just the most impossible, the most amazing thing in the world, Dora. . . . I can't even believe it now. . . . But you've got at least to know how I feel.. . . . It's—it's Gloria. . . . I think I've loved her always. . . . I know I have. . . . I never dreamed, of course. Never, never dreamed . . . until recently . . . when I discovered that she loved me. *She loves me,* Dora! I couldn't believe it. . . . The other night when she told me that I've always been her ideal, and that she's *always* loved me . . . Nothing I said made any impression. . . . She doesn't care about the difference in our ages. . . . She says only *she* can really know me and understand. . . . God, that sounds terrible. . . . But Dora. . . ."

He broke away and got up again. I leaned back against the divan and held on to the pillows. . . . Gloria! My God! It would be terrible to laugh. . . . I mustn't laugh! She was a child of thirteen when Arnold and I first! . . . Why, she was like his daughter! . . .

"I can't help it, Dora. I love her. I don't know what I've ever done to deserve such a love. . . .

Why, she's just a child. . . . And picking me out for her first love!—You don't know, Dora, how unusual she is for a girl of these days. . . . She's never run around. . . . She's never even been sweet on any of the boys that have hung on her breath. . . . You've seen her pictures. . . . You know what a little thorough-bred she is. . . ."

Yes, I knew. A chaste, and quiet-eyed beauty . . . who would grow up to be another aloof, statuesque Mrs. Thornley. . . .

"I guess I'm a damn fool, aren't I, Dora?"

"Pretty much. But that's what we live for, I imagine."

"Maybe I should go away somewhere. . . . Maybe I shouldn't even think of it. . . . It's unfair of me to do it, isn't it? Tell me, Dora. Tell me what you think. I'm all shot."

"Maybe it's unfair, Arnold. But you'll do it. She's evidently made up her mind.

"You're bitter."

"No. Don't be absurd. I have to get used to the idea, that's all."

I got up and mixed fresh drinks. I wished he wouldn't watch me. I handed him his, carefully.

"Does she know about me, Arnold?"

"Yes. Of course she does. She knows I'm here now. I just took her to the theatre, and left her home."

"Oh, I see. She sent you to break the news to mother?"

"Dora!"

"Let's drink to it." I smiled widely. "You'll make a handsome bridegroom, Arnold. Remarkably handsome. When is it to come off?"

"Sometime in the spring."

"Perfect! Only, don't look at me like that. And quit worrying, Arnold. I'm not going to make any trouble. . . ."

"Dora, please. Such a thing never entered my head."

"Well, of course not. You know me too well. But it might be bothering Gloria. I want you to go back and wish her well for me. Tell her you both have my blessings. You know. . . . I hope you'll be very happy; and whatever else one says. . . . I've had a number of funerals in my day, but I'm not very strong on weddings."

"Dora, you are the most . . ."

"Darling, I've heard all that so many times. And I'll never forget one word you've said. But please, save it all up now. You'll need it. In the spring."

"But Dora, dear . . ."

"Don't! I'm not going to cry," I laughed. "And I don't feel a bit like fainting. But I do wish you'd go home and let me take a hot bath, darling. . . . Just one more drink together. . . ."

I mixed it beautifully, and we drank it in silence. Which, I suppose, was as it should be.

"Will you kiss me good-night, Dora?"

I kissed him.

"Good-night, Arnold. And good-bye."

I went up to Lake Placid a few days later. Getting all tired and wet in the snow; skiing and tramping, and skating, and riding. Sleeping with my blood tingling. My eyes burned with the sparkle of the snow, and then they'd close of their own accord.

I couldn't cry. I didn't even want to. I didn't feel bitter. I was just all shut down inside. The machines were worn out, and had stopped.

Nobody heard from me that Christmas. I hadn't it in me to think of a present or a single card of greeting. I didn't go home until well on into January. Only regularly I phoned home to keep track of Carol, and phoned Lucy to keep track of the business.

Terribly, I tried to be interested in the business when I returned. But I couldn't work up any enthusiasm. I'd start dictating a letter, and my mind would wander off. . . .

The engagement had been announced. Plastered all over the papers.

Consuelo called me up, and just to show her I didn't care, I went out to lunch with her, and lis-

tened to her saying it was an impossible match. . . . Arnold never knew when he was well off. . . .

Marion came over after her show, that night. And I cried on her shoulder. . . . I hadn't cried so since Eddie deliberately smashed the only china doll I ever owned. . . .

Marion didn't even try to bawl hell out of me. She just held me, and never said a word, and let me ruin the blouse to her lovely new suit. . . .

XI

By Arnold's wedding day, I had argued it all out. I could laugh, and say "To hell with it," and take an interest in new clothes, and plan to let my hair grow. . . .

I had spent nearly two months in Palm Beach, taking little Carol with me. Poor kid knew I was heartbroken, somehow. . . . I guess she had caught me crying more than once. She would sit beside me in the sand, and sneak her smudgy little hand into mine. Stuck to me like a burr, and her dreamy little brown eyes would light up every time I'd build sand tunnels with her, or laugh. . . . I often watched the poor pale-faced little monkey. . . . An erratic child, high-strung and very sensitive. . . . (Small wonder!) She didn't seem a bit like Marion, except in looks; nor like Clark Adams, nor like me. Thank God, she wasn't like me. . . .

When we returned to New York, I determined to get rid of my apartment. It reminded me of too many things. . . .

Roy called me up several times. His voice embar-

rassed and husky. . . . Poor kid. . . . He cared! Sorry for me! . . . I was awfully sweet to him because I felt truly grateful. . . . But I couldn't see him. . . .

Then one night, Arnold visited me. He had felt terrible that I had run off to Palm Beach. . . . I wasn't bitter or angry with him, was I?

"No. Being bitter only ages you, Arnold," I laughed.

"The truth is, I still love you, Dora. With a particular and very true devotion. You don't despise me, Dora?"

"No. I tried. But it wouldn't work. Listen, Arnold, please don't let's try to warm up last night's coffee. We may say things we'll be sorry for. You have given me years of happiness and love. I hope I've given you the same."

"You have, Dora. But darling—I want to come to an understanding. . . . I just can't let things suddenly halt—not after all we've been through, Dora. . . ."

"I thought we *had* come to an understanding. You're to be married. We're through. Isn't that an understanding?"

He came over and sat beside me on the divan. His arm went around my shoulder, and I bit my teeth together hard.

"You're the squarest person I've ever known, Dora. I want you to know—I'll never forget."

"That goes double."

"You know—I don't think we should see each other again. . . ."

"You're dead right. But was that Gloria's idea?"

"Don't, Dora."

"I told you we'd say things we'd be sorry for. I meant myself. Anyway, it's a good idea. I still love you, Arnold, and always will. But I'd *prefer* never to see you again."

"I knew you'd understand. Everyone knows about you and me. If we saw each other—at all—it would get around in no time. I don't want to expose her to that."

"Of course."

"Dora . . ."

I drew slightly away.

"Does she know you're here now? Was this all arranged, too?"

"If you talk like that, I'll go out of my mind. No. No, she doesn't. Dora, I just had to see you. I wanted to have one little moment. . . . Because I know you love me as I love you. Just one night of farewell. . . ."

His arms were tight about me. I wanted to rise and show how furious I was. . . . But I looked at him. There were tears in his eyes. . . . My own eyes filled, and I kissed him. . . .

That night was our affair.

And it would have left everything beautiful and complete . . . Except that an artist is one who knows how to end things, and Arnold was no artist.

He had talked to me of my approaching birthday. He wished to make one final present. I insisted that I needed nothing. But Arnold laughed, and said that all women needed more than they planned on, and he wouldn't be happy unless he knew I was utterly beyond even a fanciful need.

I watched him, after breakfast, writing out a check. Too listless to care. After all, who was I to make a scene over accepting money? . . . Evidently it was the only way he would feel satisfied . . . that he had "done his part." . . .

Fortunately he left the check on the desk. Too embarrassed to really hand it to me. . . . But he came over and kissed me. "It's just a happy birthday, Dora. I'm afraid I won't be with you on your birthday."

My face was awfully tired of smiling.

"Well, you think of me. And I'll be thinking of you, Arnold."

He kissed me again. An hour later, he left. . . .

I went to my bedroom, and locked myself in.

Not until the next morning, when I was about to sit down to breakfast (costumed for business, and quite composed), did I really see and remember the check still there, face downward, on the desk. . . . I left my grapefruit, and went over slowly.

Picked it up. A film over my eyes made it difficult to distinguish for a moment. . . . Then I read . . . One hundred and fifty thousand dollars. . . . Dora Macy. . . . Arnold J. Thornley. . . .

But something else, over on the side, caught my attention. . . . I squinted at it. . . . *"Settlement in full."* . . .

The maid's voice reached me eventually. . . . I swallowed, and laid the check again, face downward, on the desk. . . . Walked over to the breakfast table and went through the gestures of breakfast. . . . Settlement in full. . . . Could he actually write that—to me? A birthday gift . . . a bandage to his conscience . . . settlement in full. . . . He had wanted to come to an *understanding*. . . .

Suddenly, I pushed back my coffee cup, and began to laugh. . . .

I laughed so hard the tears rolled down my face.

That's why, when Arnold's wedding day rolled around, I didn't feel one little quiver. That's why I could laugh, and say *"To hell with it!"* That's why I quit trying to sublet my apartment. . . . It no longer reminded me of things too precious. . . . Why should they be too precious when they could be bought? It was just an extremely comfortable and charming apartment . . . The place at Croton was merely a splendid place to run off and to relax, and bring little Carol away from the heat. . . .

Why feel sentimental over things that only had a cash and carry value. . . ?

I had locked my desk that morning before going to business. For more than a week, I didn't go near it. Then I felt capable of looking at the check. I tucked it away along with a lot of old letters and bills and other truck . . . *"Among my souvenirs"* . . . .

Marion had a lovely country place in Westchester, and Carol and I were up there for a week's playtime, when Arnold was married . . . in May. . . . I read all the accounts, and looked at the pictures of the happy couple. . . . She was a sweet looking little idiot—and Arnold was *smiling*. . . .

"The bride wore white satin, Marion," I yawned and tossed the paper over to her.

"How novel!"

Marion ignored the papers and walked over to her piano.

"It must be a solemn business, Marion—and very impressive, taken all in all."

"It is. I've been all through it."

She sat down at the piano and sampled a few notes with one finger.

"Nobody knows where they're going on their honeymoon, Marion. Think of that. You wouldn't know what the *Journal* is paying its reporters for . . . Nobody knows. . . ." I leaned back lazily and began to sing:

"*Nobody knows the troubles I've seen.*
Nobody knows . . ."

Marion laughed and played softly.

"Have a drink!"

"Don't mind if I do!"

"One woman reporter said the bride looked like an angel! Oh, to hell with it. Play something solemn and impressive, Marion. . . ."

She struck a chord and threw back her head with an earnest air. . . .

"What kind of clothes do the angels wear?
(Um-hum. Um-hum!)
What kind of clothes do the angels wear?
(Uh-hum. Oh my!)
What kinda clothes do the angels wear?

The drink was strong and it made it difficult to catch your breath. But I joined in loudly.

"Frock coat, shoes, 'n a woolen sock
And a hole in the heel,
And a heap o' tall coons done gone, done gone, gone.
And a heap o' tall coons
And he runs like a loon
And he looks like a possum
Boiling in a pot!
Old brother Toot,
And a rooty-toot-toot.

And the chickens lay their eggs
With feathers on their legs. . . .

Listen to my tale of woe . . .
My tale of woe!

Marion had a big bazaar at her shanty that night. All the gang, and they brought their gang along. By the time I saw him, I wasn't a bit surprised to find Earl Phillips present. I wasn't surprised at anything. . . .

He was very jolly. Quite the life of the party. Setting everyone up to stakes at the roulette wheel. . . . There was a comedian from Marion's show. . . . A bit pug-ugly of a genius who could really make you laugh. . . . He and Earl Phillips played a scene from "Rigoletto" and Mark wanted to sign them up as a team. . . . Everybody began playing scenes . . . They compromised on charades, and looted Marion's closets for costumes. . . .

Thus it was that Earl was dressed in one of Marion's most expensive pajamas (the only thing he could get into because they had elastics) when he elbowed me out on the upstairs porch.

"You know, Dora, I once had a dreadful tragedy in my life," says Earl, gazing up at the moon. "I've never told anybody, but I rather feel you could understand it, now."

"Tragedies make me laugh, Earl."

"Quite so. But anyway . . . Once upon a time, I had my eye on a real Velasquez. I wanted it like a baby wants milk. It took me two years to be able to actually make an offer. It took me nearly two years before I could make them sell it. I owned it for just one night. . . . They found they had no right to sell it. It had already been dealt out. . . . They had just come across a will. . . . So they came and took that Velasquez away from me."

"Well, you had one night with it. . . ."

"Yes. Quite so. You know, Dora, did you ever visit Balzac's home in Paris? No? It's a charm of a little place. He wanted a Rembrandt, once. Wanted it for years. Never could afford it. So he printed on a piece of paper *"Ici est un Rembrandt"* framed it and hung it over his desk. . . . It's still there, over his desk. . . ."

"For other people to look at and feel sorry for. . . ."

"Yes. Quite so."

"Let's go in, Earl."

"Yes. Yes. Quite so. . . . Except I wanted to tell you something. . . ."

"You have told me something."

"That's right. I have. Quite so. But there was something else. . . ."

"Are you trying to make love to me, Earl?"

"Yes. Yes. I am. Quite so. I'm trying—I'm trying to ask you if you'd care to marry me. Because I

thought it might be jolly to go down to Cartier's and pick out a ring. . . ."

I studied him. The moon was shining down on his chubby, genial face, with its suddenly earnest childlike blue eyes. . . . My throat got tight. The laughter and the music downstairs were head-splitting. . . .

"No. Thank you, Earl."

"I see . . . I didn't really suppose. . . ."

I put my hand on the arm of Marion's batik pajamas.

"Oh, it isn't that, Earl. You're a dear. But—you understand. . . ."

"Of course. Yes, surely. Quite so."

"We'd better go in. They're playing charades."

"A jolly game. Fun. What?"

"Oh, lots of fun."

The poor delightful slob made me feel better, at that. I could laugh even louder. . . . The world may not be such a nice place. . . . Men may never seem to know when you really love them . . . but life had bright spots, and at least it was interesting. What the hell else did anyone want?

I went back to my apartment a week or so later, and I was so busy I hardly remember what I did. But I did it energetically. That's all that counts. Mostly I was immersed in the business of making

other women beautiful, for which they rendered unto Cæsar. . . .

Nor was I a frump myself. After you've gone a certain number of years being beautiful, you can't give it up. It's like a drug. An absolute necessity to your nerves. . . .

Toward the end of the summer, I let Roy come up to see me. He had phoned so often; sent me flowers, been most idiotically sympathetic. . . . So I let him come up, while others were there. I wanted to show him how thoroughly it didn't matter. I was convincing. He entered into the spirit of gaiety quite naturally. I saw to it no questions were asked or answered on either side. After that, there was no constraint when Roy called on the phone. He came to dinner a few weeks later. He went to the theatre with a party I was giving. . . .

But I never saw him alone.

In October, I had my appendix out. An insufferable inconvenience. You'd think my hospital was a funeral parlor. Flowers enough to cover seven graves. And people trooping in and out to look at me. Follow the leader . . . Marion, Earl, Roy, Lucy, Consuelo, and even Rita. . . . All so attentive I couldn't figure out which to give the prize to. Why do people think you want to see them when you're sick? Being "cheered up" is enough to give anyone a relapse. . . . And who got the idea books and fruit and candy, and fruit, and flowers, and

fruit, and telegrams, and more fruit, were going to help the wound heal? The only useful thing I ever got was handkerchiefs. . . .

And who told Arnold he ought to send me something—now that he was back from his honeymoon? What was the good of a canary anyway. . . . I had a canary once with Bob Briggs. . . .

I gave the canary to my night nurse, and smoked a cigarette before I could even sit up.

Anyway, eventually I got out, and that was that. At least, if everything else failed, I could talk about my operation.

I had a nice Christmas, in Atlantic City all by myself. Which may be a rummy place to spend Christmas alone, according to your ideas. But there were so few places I could go that weren't full of memories. . . . And besides, I felt just old enough to enjoy being wheeled around in a chair.

Life was very gay when I returned. It's a scream how gay life can be, by the time it doesn't mean anything to you, one way or the other. Roy was the most attentive of all my interferences, but I was insistently unreachable. Evidently he had grown used to that in his own mother, so it only made things easier for him. (God! He had a step-mother four years younger than himself now . . . I often burned to ask him how it felt. . . .)

I didn't like the look that kept growing in Roy's sapling eyes . . . It disturbed me. So I'd freeze him

out, and then the yearning in his voice on the phone would give me a heart-ache. . . . He was just a nice kid. So upright and spoiled and young, and yet so wise and earnest . . . with his cane, and his derby slightly on one side, like his pop. . . . I just felt unable to "take steps." I decided, if things came to an issue I'd up and shock him and let it go at that. Meanwhile, I was too busy to shock him before it was necessary.

Earl was a nice stand-by. Quite so. It was restful to let him talk about art and Italy, and not even have to listen. So comforting to be able to call on him at any time. . . . So strange and so absurd for him to be taking an interest in my business. . . . So strengthening to have him remind me that there are always good rings at Cartier's. . . .

I did my damndest for months to keep away from places Arnold might be likely to go. Probably he was doing the same thing. But Arnold was likely to be anywhere. . . . So eventually I gave up the struggle. . . .

It was peculiar—bowing to him as he lifted his hat stiffly across a lobby. . . .

God-damned peculiar!

Rita telephoned me, all sniffs and gasps, one night late in May, to tell me that papa had died. Maybe I was expected to cry!

I asked if I could take care of the six McManus

children, singly or in groups, and Rita explained Ben's sister was there to watch over them.

So I hung up. And had a drink to papa, hoping he would rest in peace. At least there wouldn't be any gout in the next world. . . . nor wayward brats. . . .

Rita phoned me when she got back, two weeks later. She had invited mama to live with her, and mama had refused. She didn't want to be a burden on anyone. . . .

I couldn't blame mama for not wanting to live with Rita, and the toilet paper business, and the six children. After all, Rita's house had only eight overworked rooms.

Now I could write mama openly. But she refused to visit me. Mama hadn't corresponded with me, nor accepted any money (P.O. Box or no P.O. Box) since she had learned, years before, that I was an openly and unashamed bad character. Now, she wrote me a stiff scrawl, saying I had made my own bed and must lie in it. Or w. to that e.

Yet I kept remembering the poor straight-shouldered little creature, who had insisted upon making her own cold cream. . . . Afraid to open her lips. A good woman, with her portion of misery and silent suffering . . . A very good woman. Who had given many children life, and then couldn't do anything about it. . . .

I found I couldn't take a summer vacation be-

cause my business demanded my presence. Lucy had resigned to go with her husband to Australia. Marion was over in Europe with Mark (surreptitiously) ; Consuelo was off getting another divorce; and Roy was bothersome and continual. (He and Arnold and the whole family were summering in Tarrytown for the most part.) Roy kept hounding me as if I owed him money or something. . . . I was getting awfully fed up with dodging him, because I did like the boy. You couldn't help it. Earl was my only real counterfeit, and even Earl was becoming a bore.

I was frightfully lonely. Carol was up at Croton with her governess and I visited her each week-end. But the apartment in New York was empty—loveless—and uninteresting. It got on my nerves so, I hated to go home for dinner. . . . Trouble with me is that I was just made for love. I can't live without it. You know the kind. And I don't mean Mrs. Willebrandt. . . . I had worked my way up from soft-soap to cold-cream—and for what?

So finally mama became a permanent wedge in my thoughts. I decided if I saw her, and talked to her, she might realize I was truly a good woman at last —and that I needed her terribly. . . .

One July week-end, like the prize slob, I drove all the way to the suburb of Philadelphia. Gee, it had changed! Almost as much as I had!

The little house had evidently experienced several

coats of paint since I'd known it, but it still couldn't put a good face on things. . . .

Mama herself answered the door. So surprised she could only repeat my name over and over. . . .

I went in, and mama made me some tea. I tried to tell her how I felt.

"No, Dora," she shook her head wearily. "You don't understand. I don't want your money. . . . I don't feel it's honest money. . . ."

"Good lord, mama. I have a business—that brings me in about forty thousand a year. . . ."

"Don't be angry, Dora. I don't mean to hurt you. It's just that I can't accept you and your way of living, in my own heart. . . ."

"But I'm living alone. I've been living alone for more than a year. And I'm lonely, mama. I need somebody . . . You could mean so much to me."

But she kept on shaking her head.

I stayed over night—back in the same room where I had worried about what Needy would do to help me. . . .

Next morning mama had Philadelphia scrapple and wheat-cakes ready for me when I came down. Somehow that breakfast made me reopen the subject.

"You'll at least let me do things for you, mama? Fix up the house. . . ."

"No, Dora. Papa left five thousand dollars in-

surance. That's more than I'll need for the rest of my days. I don't need much. . . ."

"Mama! Why not at least come to New York with me for a visit? A week—or even a few days. You could even visit Rita a while too. It would do you good to get away a bit. And you've never seen New York, have you?"

"No. I've never seen New York."

"Come on, mama. Just a little visit. We'll drive slowly and carefully—together. . . ."

So mama came on. We hit New York on Monday evening, and mama was speechless over my apartment. She had read about such maids, and such service. . . .

I let her rest that night, exclaiming like a child over these and those. . . . Next morning I took her over to see my 57th Street salon, and explained something of the business. I drove her up to the Yonkers factory. . . . We had dinner at home, and then I took her to the theatre. Earl dropped in, and mother thought his "Quite so" was very nice. She told him confidentially that she never expected to have her daughter turn out so "high-class," and Earl intimated that she didn't know the half of it.

I took her shopping the next afternoon, and bought her nearly a thousand dollars worth of things she should have had years ago. . . . But she tired quickly. So that night we stayed at home; and after dinner, she listened to my radio, and I prom-

ised her one just like it . . . and an Ampico like mine. But she said she'd have no place to put such a big piano. I could see her weakening. I knew that given another week, she'd consider staying with me. . . .

At eleven o'clock (which was late for mama, but she was too thrilled to want to go to bed) I fixed a little supper. Sandwiches, toasted cheese crackers, tea and wine. . . . We sat in the living room, munching companionably and talking about Eddie. . . .

Suddenly I heard a noise that made me turn with swift and nervous concern.

A key was being fitted into my front door lock!

I sat staring, as I heard it turn. As the door opened slowly. . . . As Arnold walked in, and leaned against the door. Looking right back at me with an expression that made my heart suddenly crack through the ice that had grown around it. . . .

Before either of us could speak, mama got to her feet. Her eyes beady and fired. Her wrinkled baggy neck shaking with the anger that whipped out her words. . . .

"Dora, you told me . . . You told me there wasn't any man in your life. . . ."

"Mama, please!"

"He has a key to your apartment, and he walks in without being announced . . . No. Don't tell me. Don't try to tell me!"

I couldn't get up. I just sat quiet and watched her rush into the bedroom. . . . Listened to the noises in there. . . . It was true! He had a key, and walked in without being announced. I had forgotten he didn't return the key . . . Bob Briggs had given me back his key, but Arnold hadn't. . . .

"Dora, I'm afraid I've done something terrible. I'm afraid I spoiled . . . Can't I talk to her, Dora?"

I shook my head. I didn't look at him. I knew he sat on a chair near the door. Sat down, tired and heavily. . . .

In a moment, I had enough strength to go in to mama. She wouldn't listen to a word. Busy packing. Her hat already jammed on her head . . . She didn't want a stitch of the filthy clothes I had bought her. She might have known that I was just trying to pull the wool over her eyes. . . . But she was no object of charity . . . and she'd never forget being subjected to such a humiliation. . . .

"Mama you're being very unreasonable."

"Not two minutes more will I stay under the same roof with you and your libertine!"

"Mama!"

"I'm going. I can't go fast enough. I don't care what hour it is. . . ."

I left her. Returned to the living room, and barely glanced at Arnold, as I called my chauffeur for the car. Then I phoned Rita and announced mama

would arrive at her house in an hour or so. . . . Mama could do the explaining much better than I. . . .

Into the living room marched mama, straight-shouldered as a sergeant . . . older and shabbier than I'd ever seen her. . . .

"God will punish you, Dora! You'll live to repent such actions!"

"My chauffeur will be here in a few moments, mama. He will take you to Rita's. I've phoned her."

"I'll wait downstairs!"

I opened my mouth, but words wouldn't come. Arnold rose and held the door for mama, who walked right out, and left it for God to punish me.

When Arnold closed the door, he fished in his pocket for his silver case and lit a cigarette—without taking off his coat. . . . I went over to a chair by the window, and sat gazing out. . . . I admired mama, just the same, for such a stand . . . she was crazy, but she was uncompromising. . . . I felt sorrier than ever for her.

Arnold came to the table near me—and doused his cigarette.

"I'm sorry I came, Dora."

I was too busy to answer.

"I—I don't suppose I can ever make it up to you. . . ."

"No use!"

He was too close, and I rose swiftly and went over to the cellarette.

"A Tom Collins? Or a rye high-ball, Arnold?"

"Rye. Thanks." He took off his coat.

We drank together sitting on the divan, watching the fireplace that had no embers. . . .

"It seems like yesterday, Dora. . . ."

"Yes. It seems like yesterday."

"You—you never deposited that check, Dora. It never came through on my cancelled slips. . . ."

"No. I still have it. Careless with money, like that. I should really have it framed."

"My God, Dora, don't! I couldn't stand it if you're going to be like that. Why do you suppose I came here?"

"I don't know, Mr. Bones. Why did you come here?"

Not for the first time did I see Arnold become melodramatic. It wasn't the first time he kicked the fire-tongs over, and spluttered blasphemies. But it was the first time, when he calmed down, that he stood looking at me with such a fearful wretched misery in his eyes. . . .

I wasn't responsible! Before I knew it, I was over to him, my arms around him.

"What is it, Arnold? What's the trouble? Come and tell me."

"It's just no go, Dora. It's just—impossible. She's

the finest, sweetest girl in all the world . . . but my God, Dora. . . ."

I didn't need any more. I didn't hear the rest of what he said, sitting on my divan, his hands clasped back of his bent head . . . pouring it all out. . . .

No, I didn't need any more. I could understand . . . I could see Gloria—a child—inexperienced, spoiled, determined not to learn what it was all about. . . .

I sat beside him, and laid my cheek on his shoulder, watching the back of his hair . . . There was so much more grey through it. . . . I put my arms around him, and let him talk on and on. . . . It was something—that he should have come back to tell me. . . .

Later, I mixed him another drink. He kissed me. And I fought the desire to say "Yes, yes, come back to me . . . I love you so!"

Instead, I talked at great length. Marvelling that my voice had the calm untroubled note of the nun back in the charity hospital, the accents of the aloof, remote statue that was in her grave. . . . Was this how they get such quiet, cool voices. . . ?

I talked reason, and sense, and the need for understanding and patience . . . I talked all the stuff no man wants to hear . . . And when he became insistent, when that look came into his eyes again, I told him he must give me time—to think—

It was just striking one when I kissed his cheek

at the door, and faced my apartment alone again. I suddenly wanted to run after him, and tell him I didn't need time to think . . . *I didn't want to be alone.* . . .

After that, I tried to measure each hour with a sliding rule . . . I wished so that I had a God—a Bible to believe in—some creed—some philosophy . . . anything that would give me a platform to stand on. . . . I knew what I wanted to do. But I didn't want to do it . . . I didn't see *how* I could do it . . . I didn't seem to have any pride or self-respect when it involved Arnold.

At any hour of the day or evening, I was apt to come home and find Arnold, smoking a cigar before the fireplace . . . Lying full length on my divan . . . or mixing himself a drink.

At night, I bolted my door, before I retired—just in case a key would turn in the lock. . . .

Always Arnold agreed with me. He knew I felt no bitterness. It was just that things could never be the same. Gloria was young. A new wife. . . . It had been different somehow, with Mrs. Thornley, who had ignored others before she had to ignore me, who was capable of living graciously and magnificently . . . who had four children to watch over, and a life-time wedge in the world of society. Now, it wasn't fair. He had made his choice once. He must teach her. He must be kind. He must play

square with *someone!* Gloria deserved more than mere left-overs. . . .

And Arnold agreed. Nodding and appreciating and agreeing . . . Thoroughly convinced I was right. . . .

But again, I'd come home around five, and find him sitting there, reading. . . .

"There's no harm in letting me drop in? Surely, Dora, you wouldn't tell me not to come. After a while, maybe, I'll just go on a trip or something. . . . If you want to put me out. . . ."

No. I didn't want to put him out. But I simply couldn't stand it. I was ready to screech with nerves. I wanted to turn and run, every time I opened my door and saw him there; even when he greeted me gaily with an out-held glass of cognac. . . . Every time I'd put my own key in the lock, my heart would turn a ferris-wheel dreading and hoping his presence. . . .

In truth, his gaiety hurt worst of all. It was one evening when we dined alone, and later danced together out in the gymnasium, that I took a wild parachute of desperation.

"Dora, let's go out. . . . Let's just have a fling . . . a nice little fling. . . . I want to take you out. Just once, huh?"

"No, darling. As a matter of fact, that's our last real dance together."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—we can't go out. If we're seen together it will be all over the telephone wires by tomorrow morning. . . ."

"But Gloria—"

"There isn't only Gloria to think about, any more. You see, Arnold. I've—I've got something to tell you. I haven't really announced it, or anything . . . but, I'm going to get married, Arnold!"

(Funny I should put it that way. Some people get married, some marry, and others are married. . . . I talked of it now as if it were measles . . . Oh, well, measles when you're older come hard, but they leave your skin clearer. . . . I suddenly realized just what I intended to do . . . Sheep have a disease called "gid" when they wander off alone and die. . . . But I was no sacrificial lamb. . . .)

Arnold stopped short in the midst of wiping his brow. He might have finished wiping his brow. . . .

"Dora. You mean it?"

"Is it so impossible? Yes, I do mean it, Arnold. There's been more than one noble and stalwart son who was willing to try to make an honest woman of me. I've decided it might have its advantages. Being an honest woman. . . ."

"Dora, you're crazy. . . . You're in love with me, and you know it."

"You're very convincing," I laughed. "But it's all set. I'm going to be married, honey. In a church, with white, with flowers, with organ music. . . ."

"Who?"

"Earl Phillips."

"You don't love him. You couldn't . . . why, Dora, of all the absurd combinations. . . . You'll suffocate with a man like that . . . you'll curl up and die. . . ."

"I didn't try to tell you that about Gloria? Did I?" I flared. "I let you run your own life."

"I wish to God you hadn't."

"A lot of good it would have been, trying to stop you! I've made many mistakes in my life, Arnold. But this time, I've got my eyes wide open, and I don't see a thing!"

Something happened to his mouth, as he gazed at me. . . . It reminded me of the first time he had kissed me, that New Year's Eve at Gedney Farms. . . .

Then he walked past me, out of the gymnasium. I turned off the radio right in the middle of a *boop-oop-a-doop,* and went into the bathroom to arrange my hair. My cheeks were blazing.

I thought at last, he must have gone. I went in search of him. He was standing at the ledge of the roof, looking over New York and blowing smoke at it. . . .

"I saw Phillips only last night," he said, after I had come and stood beside him.

"Didn't he tell you?"

"No. Not a word. We never even mentioned you."

"Well, we haven't told anyone. I wanted it that way."

The lights from the Metropolitan tower flashed a very deliberate midnight.

"Well, guess I'd better be getting on," Arnold threw down his cigar and clamped his foot over it. "I suppose we won't see each other any more. . . ?"

"Why, of course. Here and there. When we meet. We're friends, Arnold?"

"Good friends. Good night, Dora. God bless you."

I watched him go. I felt so sorry for him. But it was best. . . . If only I could quiet *my* conscience by writing him a check . . . Settlement in full. . . .

About an hour after he had left, I telephoned Earl Phillips.

"Want to be taken somewhere?" he demanded hopefully.

"Well, yes—in a way," I smiled at his amiable tones. "Do you still think it would be jolly, Earl, to go to Cartier's and pick out a ring?"

"Dora—are you spoofing me?"

"Never more serious in my life."

"Are you sober?"

"Never more sober. I'm just driven to virtue by all that goes on around me."

"I'll be right over."

"No, Earl . . . Marion is coming here shortly."

"Oh. Quite so."

"Shall I announce it to her?"

"Yes. Yes, indeed. Tell her, by all means. I'd rather enjoy telling people myself . . . May I announce it in the papers, Dora?"

"You can catch the morning edition, if you want. Earl, will you be a good papa to Carol?"

"Why, if you show me how. Charmed, I'm sure."

"You're a darling, Earl."

"And will you breakfast with me—at the Plaza? We can go from there to Cartier's."

"Splendid."

"I think so. When shall I say the date, Dora?"

"Whenever you'd like, Earl dear."

"We might be married next week. . . ."

"I want a wedding, Earl. A real wedding. Silly of me, don't you think?"

"Very silly. Very. I'm afraid you might change your mind."

"How's for November?"

"Much too long. Oh, much."

"Well, when?"

"End of September ought to give you plenty of time."

"It ought to."

"We might go to Morocco. That should be nice, don't you think, Dora?"

"Quite so." (He had me doing it!) "But we'll talk of it tomorrow, darling."

"I won't be able to sleep, you know, Dora."

"You've had wakeful nights before."

"Yes. Yes, I have. Quite so. Well, it's wonderful. That's all. Very wonderful. You're sure you're not making a mistake?"

"No. Who can be sure? It's up to you to prove that to me, darling."

"Of course. Certainly. Well, I will, Dora."

"It will be hundred percent all round, Earl. I promise you."

"You know—I love you, Dora."

"You're the nicest person on God's green earth, Earl."

One would think that was enough for an evening. I certainly thought so. All through my bath, all the while I was combing out my gradually lengthening hair, before the mirror, I thought it was enough. Quite so.

But an hour later, my door-bell rang with a ferocity that would have wakened me if I could have slept. . . .

Fernand knocked at my door.

"It's the young Mr. Roy," she said confidentially. "He says he must see you."

I poked my feet hastily into mules, and drew on

a pink velvet negligee. I couldn't breathe—for fear. . . . If something had happened to Arnold. . . .

"For God's sake, Roy, what's the matter?"

The boy stood in the center of my living room, so tense that he swayed.

"Is my father here?"

"No."

"He is! I know he is!"

"Roy! You've been drinking!"

"I haven't. I haven't had a drop. He's here. I know it!"

"Go and look yourself," I shrugged.

For a moment Roy hesitated. Then without a word, he stalked past me . . . through the inner rooms . . . opening doors. . . .

I poured myself some cognac.

He came back. And stood looking at me limply.

"I'd like to know what in hell you think you're doing, bouncing in on me at such an hour!" I started furiously.

"I'm sorry Dora," he interrupted, brokenly. "But I just heard about it. I didn't dream . . . He's been coming here. I know he has.

"It happens to be none of your damn business, whether he comes or goes."

"I'm going to make it my business, though. If you'll let me, Dora."

I reached out and took hold of the mantle. The boy came closer to me, and the light in his eyes had

changed . . . to the old lovesick glow that bothered me for months. . . . Good God! It was *I*—not Gloria he was trying to protect. . . !

"Dora, I was afraid to tell you. I thought you might laugh at me. But I've loved you for so long, Dora. And I understand—better than anyone could understand. . . ."

(My mind flashed to how Arnold had told me Gloria convinced him of that . . . and all the while Roy went on talking . . . my ears caught every other word or so, as if someone were turning a radio dial from one station to another. . . .)

"He never appreciated you, Dora. He treated you rotten. I could have told him about Gloria! I was never so humiliated as when he married her . . . He, nearly twice her age! . . And all these years you've been true to him . . . I know. . . . And when I heard he started to come back to you, I nearly went out of my mind . . . I couldn't stand that, Dora. He has no right . . . I've got to tell you how much I love you, and make you believe it. . . ."

"And even if I believe it, what do you want me to do about it, Roy?"

"I want you to marry me. Because, Dora, I'm not so much younger than you . . . Only in years, anyway . . . And you're not the kind that age makes a difference. . . . Dora, don't walk away from me!"

"Roy, dear, you might take off your hat when you propose to a lady."

"If you laugh at me, I'll. . . ."

"I'm trying to cover my confusion, Roy. I'm so dreadfully touched—and flattered, Roy. That you, of all people. . . ."

"Dora, you do. . . ."

"Take off your coat, and sit down, dear. We'll have a drink together. Would you like a drink with me?"

He nodded, and smiled one-sidedly as he sat on the edge of the divan, his hands between his knees. . . . I felt choked . . . Arnold's son . . . offering me the family name. . . .That would make me Gloria's daughter-in-law, and wouldn't family dinners be jolly . . . If Arnold knew his oldest and favorite son was here. . . .

I bent closer to the drinks, winding them round and round with a tall spoon. . . . What a revenge! What a magnificent whale of. . . ! What in hell am I thinking of? A woman scorned and all that goes with it. . . . Settlement in full. . . .

No. It wasn't that I was above it. I just felt it beneath me, somehow. It was almost incestuous.

I brought the drink over to Roy. And sat on the other corner of the divan. Looked at him, and drank slowly . . . A child-man . . . Twenty-six, and just let out of Yale . . . full of romantic gibberish . . . beautiful, sweet, genuine gibberish. . .

"Roy, you're the sweetest, dearest boy I've ever known."

"I'm not a boy."

"All men I've ever known have loved being called boys. Has it ever occurred to you how many men I've known, Roy?"

"I don't care. I'm not just out of the cradle."

"No, you're not. I've never known a more level-headed, or a more genuine man. No, not even your father."

"We'll leave him out of this."

"You couldn't very well. You didn't intend never to see him, did you?"

"I'll look him in the face—plenty. When you're my wife."

"Roy, darling, knighthood isn't in flower!"

"Dora, don't laugh at me. I'll make you believe me. Now that I've told you—and you didn't actually kick me out. . . ."

"I'd never kick you out, Roy. I'm too fond of you."

"I'll never stop until I make you believe, Dora. You *are* fond of me. I know I could make you love me. Because I love you so. I'll certainly never stop trying. . . ."

I got to my feet.

"Roy, dear, I'm afraid it's too late. You see, I'm already engaged to be married. To Earl Phillips."

"*Earl Phillips!* That old leg-of-mutton! Dora, you don't mean it!"

"I'll thank you not to call my fiancé a leg of mutton. I certainly do mean it."

"Where's your ring?"

"Why—at Cartier's, being specially designed."

"That's not true. Dora, you're taking me for a ride around the block. Aren't you?

"You'll read it in the papers tomorrow. We're going to be married in September. We're going to honeymoon in—I forget—the place that's named after book bindings."

"I'm going to call up Earl Phillips! Right now."

(Determined young upstart!)

"Do you know how to dial?" I offered politely.

I sat back in the divan and lit a cigarette, listening to his one-sided conversation . . . I could fill in the "Quite so" on the other end.

He sat back, and measured the telephone with one eye as if he were going to draw it. Then he shuffled to his feet.

"I've made one swell big fool of myself, I guess," he said.

"No, Roy. You've made a man of yourself."

He lifted up his coat, and I didn't object. Carefully he adjusted his derby to the correct off-angle, and then gave it a final tap with the palm of his hand.

"I guess I ought to say I hope you'll be happy,

Dora. I certainly ought. I do want you to be. But not that way . . . You don't love him, I'm pretty sure of that . . . But you don't love me, either. So what difference does it make? You never could love me, could you, Dora?"

"Not the way you will be loved some day, Roy."

"No. If I can't have you, I don't want anybody. Ever."

"I thought that once about somebody."

"You just laugh at me. That's all. You'd always laugh at me. You'll probably be laughing behind my back. . . ."

"Roy!"

"I mean—in your mind——Goodnight. Goodbye, Dora. You're never going to see me again. Goodbye."

He was gone . . . leaving his cane behind him.

Well, you wouldn't have slept much that night, either! If I had known—I'd never have closed my eyes. . . . I had wanted to run after Arnold, when he left, and call him back. . . . If only I had wanted to run after Roy. . . .

I was surprised at the excitement of my engagement. And the growing thrill of knowing there was a man who loved me enough to give all and ask nothing. . . . The shoe was on the other foot for once. But each hour as my heart mellowed with

gratitude and appreciation, I swore that Earl would never regret his bargain. . . .

But my thorough satisfaction was suddenly interrupted, only two days after the announcement in the papers, the breakfast at the Plaza, and the trip to Cartier's (the first time, I selected an engagement and a wedding ring with a man very much beside me!), by a visit from Arnold.

I found him pacing up and down as I came home one evening after the theater. Fortunately, I was alone.

"Arnold," I protested irritably, "this certainly isn't sporting of you. I left *you* alone! I wish you'd give my your key. After all, fun is fun!"

He looked so haggard.

"What's the matter, Arnold?" I added sharply.

"Dora, do you know where Roy is?"

"Of course not. I haven't seen him. . . ."

"Since Wednesday night. I know. I know everything that happened, Dora. He went to Hubbard and told him . . . I got it out of the boy this morning. He told Hubbard how you had turned him down. He drove off in his car, around three that same morning . . . We haven't seen him since. We don't know where he is."

I shrugged.

"He's probably gone off to sympathize with himself. You'll hear from him. Here. Have a drink."

"No. I can't. If I only knew where to go—where

to find him. If anything happened to him, Dora . . . Gee, honey, even the kid loved you—I can't stand it. . . ."

"Oh, do calm yourself, Arnold. He's just a boy. He's all right. It's just the dramatics of youthful romance. . . ."

But my own heart was beating with terror. The boy had meant business that night when he came looking for his father. . . . He took himself so seriously. . . . If anything should happen to him. . . . I tried to remember, as I talked on and on to Arnold, whether I had said anything. . . .

Even after Arnold left, I couldn't quiet myself. I went out on the roof, and wished to God I was dead. . . .

You read about it in the papers. The son of Arnold J. Thornley, who was found on the road under his smashed and overturned car—dead! He had been asleep at the steering wheel . . . the papers said.

Earl went to the funeral. Arnold said things to the papers. Very wonderful things. . . . All of Roy's estate endowed a seat at his university. . . . Gloria herself called me and asked me to come to the funeral. I simply couldn't. I couldn't.

Besides, I was beyond all feeling. It didn't faze me. It was just one the books—like everything else.

There was nothing to do about it. No use trying to think about it, or figure it out. . . .

I kept my mouth shut. That's as much as I would do.

Earl and I postponed our wedding, too. Not until just before Christmas did you see the pictures of Dora Macy as a bride . . . (The pictures didn't do me justice, either). . . . At last I knew how it felt to face an altar and promise "for better or for worse"; to walk down the aisle to the throb of an organ . . . to receive gifts from people who wished you well, and whispered remarks. . . .

No bride ever took her vows more completely to heart. Earl was my husband. My *husband*. . . .

On the way home from our ten months' honeymoon I asked Earl if there wasn't some place in the world to live besides New York. Earl was handy with suggestions. After all, he had a house in New York, one on the left bank in Paris (which reminded me of too many things), one in Tuxedo Park, a huge yacht moored in Florida, and a hunting lodge in North Carolina. Earl was eager and full of plans. He wanted to open them all. There was a reason now, for having houses . . . besides merely lending or renting them to people. . . .

Upon our arrival in New York, we went to Marion's most fantastic opening (with her name in letters the size of a rhinocerous' mouth, and five thousand dollars a week—I mean in cash!) Mark and

Marion took us on a party later. Earl loved parties. Particularly when everyone insisted I never looked better, or more bejeweled, or prettier. . . .

New York had had its face lifted many times in the past ten years. (I suppose I'll come to that, too, some day.) But the old stamping ground looked strange and formidable, somehow.

Consuelo greeted me effusively over the phone, and invited Earl and me to dine on Sunday night. I didn't trust Consuelo in amatory intrigue as far as I could kick a battleship. But I knew she'd pull no tricks on Earl. (One of the remarkable serenities of being a wife!) So Earl and I got into our best merchandise (he, very proud that I was wearing a chinchilla coat, nor was I blasé about it myself), and we went up to Consuelo's for groceries. An elaborate dinner it was, too, quite in our honor.

And a shock, of high-water mark!

For I found myself sitting on the right hand of the host (Consuelo's third husband, Alan Royce), surrounded all about by people I hadn't quite met before. (Merely an oversight I suppose!) I became frightfully amused. Barely able to keep my mind on the lovely swaps of opinions on Nan Britton's precious historical tome . . . Because I'd look from one wife to the other, and wonder if she knew what I knew about her husband! And now that I met them, (even though they were so gratefully mel-

lowed by candlelight) I could understand how their husbands got like that. . . .

It's a terrible strain being proper and unctious, politely unintelligent and ceremoniously rude. But I'm nothing if not adaptable. And I kept my eyes on Earl. Which pleased him.

Behold! Before I realized it I was accepted in society! A dinner invitation, shortly after Connie's affair, from Mrs. Zaida Crowley (and if you don't know who she is, you must be awfully bourgeoise) bowled Earl over. And so I took a drink on it. If Earl were secretly anxious that I should be numbered among the tidy elite, why that was my job. Ergo; I went to Mrs. Crowley's dinner, looking as much like a family tree as possible in black lace.

A bit thrilled myself, at that; especially when I considered my source. So while Earl beamed and schemed and strutted like a turkey just ready for killing, I decided to go society, in a great big way.

I opened Earl's home on Sutton Place; bought up a few big-bellied footmen, a cook who couldn't speak English, and a Russian Count, who happened to be off duty, for a secretary. Then I pondered on some way I could be slightly odd and doddering, (I mean, outside my business and little Carol, neither of which was a novelty); and decided upon snuff. Which was quite a lot of fun, and took pains to procure. Along with historical snuff-boxes.

There was little left for me to seize upon as a

charitable hobby. The newsboys, orphans, doomed tuberculars, French and Belgium refugees, working girls, reformed criminals, and wayward-daughters-of-evolution, were all snatched up. I almost spent sleepless nights over it. Then I gave up the idea of forming a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Bulbs and Herbs, in preference to The Big Sisters of Unfortunate Firemen. A happy choice. Any number of elegant absent-minded ladies became thoroughly engrossed in the firemen *and* their families. I organized it all carefully, with papers drawn up, and resolutions, and secretaries, and a list of patronesses too long for the stationery I'd ordered from Tiffany. Our only difficulty was in convincing enough firemen that they were unfortunate; particularly when I did not attend the meetings myself. (And the leading spirit and organizer should never actually attend the meetings, you know that yourself!) Anyway, the papers swallowed it hook and ladder, and I was interviewed by a charming nitwit and gave my opinions on fire fodder.

Just to be even more in the swim, I refused to ride in elevators, and always climbed my own stairs. I built a hell of a fine aquarium in my reconstructed cellar, where fish from all over the world swam contentedly, never knowing the difference. I found a lot of things I couldn't eat, and nothing I couldn't drink; and before you could read the dictionary through, I was eccentric enough to hold my own with

any of the affability. Meaning the ladies, of course, for one is really never in society until they accept you. The men are a cinch. You can put your feet right up on the table, stretch back and yawn, "God, let's go some place!" And they'll all add, "Quite so."

I was content to remain in New York and play this new li'l game that entire winter. Because Arnold and his wife had evidently gone to the Riviera. As soon as he returned, Earl and I Havanad for several months. Later, we went to the coast, where Marion was making a picture. The motion picture industry had been put on a sound basis; and Marion was making a picture right out loud. (She sneaked Carol off and had a test made of the child. Which was the first and only tiff between Marion and me. Why in the name of casting couches should Carol turn an eye toward the stage or screen, when I had her nicely in line for a debut? A much better way of getting her picture in the papers. Marion answered by reminding me of Lady Manners and Governor Pinchot's daughter. Which only opened the door, and I walked right in. . . . Finally, I stamped out the blaze of Marion's ambitions for our community off-spring, by asking if she wanted the child to grow up like its father. After that, we didn't even go to see the test.)

We returned to New York and the house on Sutton Place in time for the opening of the Metro-

politan Opera. And settled down for a winter of the subtle flash-lights of society, who, thank God, never stayed put. Segment by segment they'd run off to Miami or Paris, or go get presented at Court, or meet the Pope. So you really only had to wrestle with them in spasms. Once they were en route, I'd dust off their files and sigh contentedly. (I had a complete file for every drop of blue blood that spattered my horizon. Who were their papas and mamas, their husbands, their side-loves and their dead loves. So that I'd never make the error of speaking wisely but not too well. I'm nothing if not thorough. And they were a cagey crew.)

Earl, meanwhile, was superbly happy. Chubbier and more genial than ever; and stuttering worse with each month that so happily slipped by. The time he had to have two teeth pulled, I read to him for hours beside his huge canopied bed. I watched him like a sentinel so he never imbibed too much. Bad for his heart. I was careful that he never lost his temper to the point of getting a headache. Every afternoon I'd make him take a nap, even if I had to take a nap myself. I got him a trainer, to relieve me of some of the routine. And so I discovered that every man needs at least three women. A mother, a mistress and a wife. In the order named. And generally he can actually choose only one of them. Which is a tough break. Some men, of course, have a weakness for a small daughter. Others, too, go in

for old family cooks. And not altogether in mystery stories, either. . . .

My particular husband fostered art. No harm meant, of course. So in the winter of '28, I fostered a bit myself. I found a pale-faced young man, whose wit had been sharpened by hunger, (which gave us something in common), and whose aim in life was to make an honest woman out of jazz. What Arnold had taught me about music did not come amiss. For a long while I inspired the young man right through the stages of his public appearances and his absurd raking-in of coin. But I became bored. He was so thoroughly convinced he was a genius. And he quit shocking my guests—and after all I had to get some fun out of fostering! Besides, I knew you couldn't make jazz acceptable with a powdered wig. I knew it from experience. Quite so.

Perhaps my lassitude in the matter, late that winter, could be Freuded down to a news item which had thoroughly disturbed me. I read, in briefest detail, that Gloria Potter Thornley had been granted a divorce in Reno from Arnold J. Thornley. . . . Poor Earl—he told me the news at dinner that night, stuttering unmercifully. . . . I couldn't have been less concerned over an unfortunate fireman. . . . Poor Earl . . . He certainly wasn't to worry. . . .

Not long after, we met Arnold at a dinner party given by Consuelo. It's none of anybody's business

if my heart gave me a run-around when I saw him. I was frigidly charming—only because I caught the light of fear and worry in Earl's eyes. . . . Earl was horribly jolly and possessive all evening. And I was never more responsive to him. . . .

Arnold phoned me three days later. My maid told him I was out. Twice that afternoon, once that evening, and countless times the following four days. Each call, it was easier to tell the maid to say I was out. . . .

The day came when he didn't phone at all. And I knew he wouldn't try again.

I didn't think I could cry like that, any more. But it was a great relief. Because afterward, I said, "To hell with it", and didn't care. . . . I didn't picture him any more, alone—with Roy gone—and Gloria gone. . . . I just didn't think about him. . . .

Earl must have known. He was so unbearably tender and anxious to please. But life was tasteless and dull, no matter what Earl thought up to do. Poor charming, anxious darling. . . . His magnificent way of overlooking my lassitude; and his ceaseless determination to find some way to interest me. Until at last he made me remember what I had told Arnold—*You must play fair with somebody.* . . .

So toward autumn, I put my arms around Earl and repeated my marriage vows all over again. Making him say them too. . . .

I listened to his plan to reopen his estate in North

Carolina, and roused due enthusiasm. We went down in September, and it really was fun putting the place in shape. I adored riding, and hunting; and we gave some memorable house-parties that season. Later we came up to New York for a spree . . . where I rode in the Horse Show, and my mount won a blue ribbon . . . and where I learned, through Consuelo, that Arnold had another lady-fair . . . an aviatrix, in fact! . . . and they come high! . . .

It didn't bother me—much.

So I went back to North Carolina, where my calendar suddenly went crazy . . . and where I sent for a doctor from New York, no less, before I was convinced that I was truly going to have a baby!

Earl was so insanely exultant that he got high blood-pressure, and needed far more medical care than I!

As for myself—I couldn't believe it . . . That life was actually giving me the one prize I had thrown away . . . Giving it to me just before it was too late. . . . Giving me one more chance! So often, as I lay in the dark with my hands pressed against my sides, I would think that somewhere—(please God, some nice where!)—there was a boy of nineteen that I had given life! Often, I would watch little Carol, at the gawky tom-boy age now, astride her horse . . . and wonder if mine would be a daughter. . . . I'd try not to remember Needy, or Bob Briggs, or Bertie, or Larry Grey—or Arnold!

. . . I'd look at Earl's chubby face and his shining devoted eyes, and my own eyes would smart. . . .

I had married Earl to escape from Arnold. To escape from my love for him. I had brought Earl joy and peace and content—and now he was giving me my one compensation—something I could really love, somebody I could really have as *my own. . . !*

As time drew closer, and I actually felt life, it was all I could do to conquer a fear. Not for myself, but for my baby. . . . I didn't mind if it were to mean the end for me. Except that again I would be robbed of really having a child. As it was, there would be such a tremendous bridge of years between us. . . . I'd be fifty, when my child was thirteen . . . Sixty, when it would be twenty-three! . . . But I feared so for the future of that child . . . I wanted to write a letter and leave it somewhere for it . . . telling it, if it were a son, to grow up to be like Arnold. . . . God! If only it were Arnold's child! If only. . . .

Consuelo and her husband came down one weekend with Marion and Mark. Earl blabbed the news, his voice getting high falsetto as he popped corks. . . . Marion and I talked late that night. She was so sure she knew how I felt . . . Insisting her show would be closed, and she'd be down in North Carolina right beside me. . . .

I had a talk with Consuelo the next day, too. We

were sitting idly on the veranda, watching the others practice their putting on the lawn below.

"Are you really happy about it, Dora? I mean, honestly? Personally, you know, I could never bear the thought. I think it's a terrible mistake—for anyone!"

"I'm thrilled, Connie. I only hope to God it will be twins."

"You always were energetic. . . . Earl is just a romping lamb, isn't he? Of course, he'd be glad. Quite an achievement, if you ask me."

I laughed. Connie never meant any harm. I usually loathe the kind of people who never mean any harm. . . .

"You know, Dora," she clicked aimlessly on her cigarette lighter as she narrowed her smooth eyebrows at Earl. "I don't give him so very long. Two or three years. Maybe five, at the most."

I didn't answer. I was watching Earl, too.

"Mighty neat little trick, Dora. You were pretty smart."

"Yes, I was pretty smart—I guess."

We didn't mean the same thing. But what did it matter? Wars are started by people who try to explain they didn't mean the same thing. . . .

"Of course, in a way, you were an ass, Dora," Consuelo yawned softly. "You could have divorced Earl and really *married* Arnold. He was just ripe for it, a while back. I know. He talked to me. You

know it too. You really didn't play the cards so cute, at all. . . ."

"No. Not so cute. I never was good at cards," I mumbled. I was glad Connie had dragged the thought to light at last . . . It was the one ghost that had been stalking. . . . I was still watching Earl, as Connie got up and joined the game. . . . Earl's sparse hair was lifted upright by the breeze. . . . His voice was mellowed and assured, as he called out a score. . . .

He smiled up at me suddenly . . . A genial, chubby smile. . . . The tears came to my eyes suddenly . . . I smiled back, and blew him a kiss across the verandah rail. . . . *You have to play fair with somebody.* . . .

Quite so!

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